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ABSTRACT

For the 4th year, the Center for Education Reform has evaluated the strength of state legislation establishing charter schools throughout America. The Center offers the nation's only comprehensive evaluation of all charter-school laws using well-established criteria. These laws fall along a spectrum from "strong" (fostering the development of numerous, genuinely independent charter schools) to "weak" (providing few opportunities for development). Thirty-seven state charter laws are ranked according to strength using an A to F grading system. The legislative analysis of each state's charter law and ranking in this document is important for several reasons: the data can serve as guideposts for what kind of charter activity is likely to occur under certain legislative conditions; they also provide a useful yardstick against which to measure and fashion forthcoming legislation and amendments; and they can create awareness of the details and repercussions of various policies by considering the path taken by other states. It is hoped that this document will serve as a guide for states in evaluating their own charter laws for the first time or revisiting the laws with an eye to making potential amendments. (RT)

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CHARTER SCHOOL LAWS ACROSS THE STATES 2000

RANKING SCORE CARD AND LEGISLATIVE PROFILES

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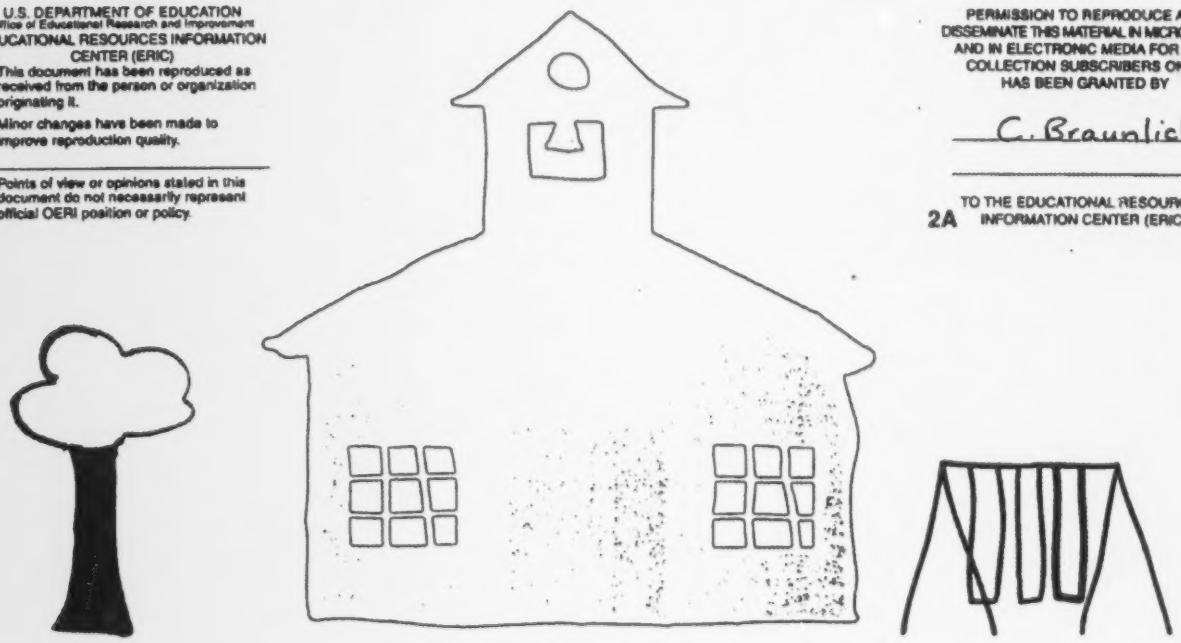

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CHARTER SCHOOL LAWS:
STATE BY STATE RANKING AND PROFILES

What This Report Means

For the fourth year, the Center for Education Reform has undertaken to evaluate the strength of the state legislation establishing charter schools throughout the nation. Using well-established criteria, the Center offers the nation's only comprehensive evaluation of all charter school laws. That said, we recognize that to some extent, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. While some of the aspects of the evaluation may be influenced by personal observations and knowledge, the evaluation components are based on sound, objective measures of how to evaluate progress toward the intended goal that charter laws seek: To provide the maximum capacity and flexibility within a state to yield the establishment of highly successful charter schools.

Strong and Weak Legislation

Simply passing a law does not guarantee that charter schools will blossom in a given state. The specific provisions in each law help determine just how many charter schools will actually open and how independent they will actually be, according to the opportunities or barriers established by the legislation. In addition, the attitude (support, neutrality, or opposition) of key actors in the existing local and state education system toward charter schools can have a significant effect on actual charter school activity and autonomy.

A **strong** law (also known as a "live," "effective," "expansive" or "progressive" law) is one that fosters the development of numerous, genuinely independent charter schools. At the other end of the spectrum, a **weak** law (also known as a "dead," "restrictive" or "ineffective" law) is one that provides few opportunities or incentives for charter school development.

This year, CER established **a grading system** to more clearly delineate how likely it is that charter schools will grow and thrive in a particular state.

With the increasing complexity of laws and the addition of two states since the last formal ranking, these refined levels are provided to further clarify exactly where each state stands. Grades of A-F span the strong-weak spectrum. For example:

"A": These laws allow for a significant number of charter schools and contribute positively to their growth and development. **Minnesota** remains among the strongest laws and has gained additional ground for lifting the cap on the number of schools and adding university sponsors.

"B": These laws also allow for healthy growth of charter schools but contain some significant provisions that may impede growth. **Pennsylvania** gets a B because its law guarantees equitable funding and significant autonomy to charters, but it also often leads to charters locking horns with the school districts through which their money flows.

"C": These laws may allow for a good number of schools, but still pose significant challenges to sustaining a prolific and healthy charter environment. **Ohio** gets a C because despite its more than 50 charters the law limits charters to the big-eight urban districts, restricts funding and has hobbled charter autonomy with too many restrictions.

"D": These laws largely allow conventional education bureaucracies to regulate the establishment and operation of charter schools. While schools have opened under these laws, they are heavily regulated and are few and far between. An example of these very weak laws is **Arkansas**, which, despite allowing for start-up schools for the first time this year, still views charters as a reform that needs the blessing of the school district.

And then there's **Mississippi**, which failed entirely because it simply offers no real charter environment at all. This is a law in name only.

Why A Law's Strength Matters

One fact that makes any charter law evaluation difficult and subject to debate is that every law is truly unique. While at one time it was relatively easy to compare a handful of laws, today 37 different laws exist, some of which on the surface appear strong but in practice are weak, and visa versa.

Without question, "the charter movement" has become increasingly complicated. Some would say that the best law is one that is no more than a few pages in length and clearly lays out the important goals, freedoms and restrictions, leaving the implementation up to the various state and local agencies involved. Nevertheless, some charter school laws are voluminous, perhaps reflecting the growing alarm felt by many in traditional venues of public education toward this new form of public school.

But the real issue is not length, but strength. Eighteen states in 1999 amended their charter laws in an effort to make them more friendly. But simply amending a law does not necessarily make it better.

For example, Hawaii's law was amended to allow start-up schools in addition to conversion schools — in theory a significant improvement. However, because Hawaii is *one* school district controlled by the state, and because charters there still have to comply with collective bargaining and some district rules, it remains poorly ranked, at 31st, and as a result, gets a D grade.

Such pitfalls are not unusual in states with weaker laws. Those laws often require a more sophisticated and first-hand knowledge of typical education procedures, not to mention the wherewithal to navigate through competing power centers, like school boards or central office administration, in order to achieve even minimal charter progress.

Teachers and parents in **Alaska** — a state with a low C —are alarmed at the issues they've been forced to negotiate into their charter contract. Alaska's law stipulates that the State Department of Education is the ultimate approving body for charter schools in the state, and the DOE has used that role to micro-control charter applicants, requiring them to negotiate point by point the most basic functions and procedures (including budgeting, program changes and even personnel or service contracts) — procedures that charters in states with higher grades routinely (and successfully) determine on their own. While the state offers technical assistance to applicants, their micromanaging of the chartering process has placed a significant damper on charter activity and autonomy in favor of a stronger central government agency management.

But while weaker state laws clearly inhibit charter school activity, states with stronger laws are not without obstacles. For example, having failed to ward off charters in their city, members of the Tucson, **Arizona** city council amended municipal zoning requirements to prohibit the opening of any new charter school not located on at least five acres or not having approved traffic patterns in place.

North Carolina's law merits a solid B, and charters there are fortunate to thrive in a very open charter climate, which is ranked 11th of 37. And yet various contractual agreements and onerous auditing procedures at the state level have been cause for much complaint and administrative burdens at a number of schools. For example, the state education department has required charters to sign contracts that allow state officials to later impose additional requirements above and beyond what is prescribed by the law.

And despite the fact that charters and public education in general are a state function, the federal Department of Education has become overly involved in the monitoring of charters. The US DOE has used its stimulus funds to audit, at will and with little notice, a sampling of charter schools and charter authorizers. While such audits might in theory be perfectly appropriate, their

mode of implementation places undue burdens on charter school officials, who do not have the same administrative resources as traditional district schools to handle the inquiries and bureaucratic minutia demanded by these federal (and sometimes even state) officials.

In analyzing each state's charter law, we have tried to account for the effect of such legal and political influence on the swiftness and scope of charter activity in a state and to reflect such issues in their relative ranking.

The Urban Issue

The reader should understand one particular nuance involved in creating and comparing laws. One developing focus is to stimulate urban educational revitalization where educational opportunity is low and the demand for politicians to try something innovative is high. Thus when faced with negotiating charter activity in an entire state or limited to a few areas, legislators in four states have opted to allow more flowers to bloom in the inner city, rather than fight suburban complacency to push the charter concept. Thus **Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin** and **Illinois** are likely to see some of the nation's strongest charter activity in their most troubled areas, while charter activity in the suburbs is either forbidden or very difficult to achieve.

But the need and demand for charter schools transcends racial, socioeconomic and political lines. While the urban focus of some charter laws is not without merit — American cities are in urgent need of fundamental education reform, and any efforts to foster such improvements should be embraced and applauded — even more advantaged areas are in need of, and demanding, public education reform. Lawmakers need to consider whether limiting their scope to urban areas actually undermines the main intention of charters, which is to help stimulate better schools for all children period. Charter schools have opened and are thriving in such advantaged areas as Princeton, **New Jersey**, San Carlos, **California**, Colorado Springs, **Colorado** and Grand Rapids, **Michigan**.

Ranking the States

Charter School Laws Across the States ranks all 37 charter school laws according to their relative strength or weakness in each of ten categories. Each state is ranked for each criterion on a scale of 0 to 5, based on how that state's provisions under that criterion support or restrict the development of a significant number of autonomous charter schools (strongly support = 5; strongly restrict = 0), or, in the case of recently passed or amended laws, are likely to do so. The maximum score a charter law may receive is 50 and the minimum score is 0.

For our initial ranking in 1997-1998, each law received individual scores for each of the above ten categories by a panel of experts composed of Jeanne

Allen, President of the Center for Education Reform, Linda Brown, Director of the Pioneer Institute Charter School Resource Center, and Chester Finn, Fordham Foundation President and John M. Olin Fellow at the Hudson Institute. Then this year, most existing and the two new laws were reviewed with the involvement of Bruno Manno, Senior Fellow with the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Baltimore, Maryland. (Finn and Manno are co-authors with Greg Vanourek of *Charter Schools in Action*, published by Princeton University Press.) The panelists' scores were averaged to obtain the final results.

Scores take into account both official provisions (including the law, subsequent amendments, state board regulations, legal rulings, and department of education policy) and the realities of actual implementation (those more intangible factors at play that effect a state's overall "friendliness" to the charter concept and ultimately determine just how many charter schools will open).

Laws are judged not only on their intent, but also on their effect. For example:

* Charter activity in individual cities like Kansas City, **Missouri** and Chicago, **Illinois** is relatively high, due to a proactive reform attitude among city officials, but outside the city charter efforts have been stonewalled by local boards or in the case of Missouri, are not permitted at all.

* **California**'s charter law was greatly strengthened by the legislature in 1998, but a concession requiring state certification of all charter teachers resulted in a loss of points under legal autonomy. (Charters in many states have thrived because of their ability to hire highly qualified but uncertified individuals from a variety of fields.) Subsequently, California improved its law a bit in 1999 to secure more direct funding for charters.

Laws are also judged on current applicability, not just potential. For example:

* **New Jersey** has ranked among the nation's strongest laws in the past, yet over the past two years charters there have struggled to gain full funding, school boards have sued to stop them and state authorities have tied up contract negotiations over areas normally under the purview of charter governing boards.

* **New Hampshire's** law contains many strong elements that would allow charters to thrive, but so many impediments in the approval process have prevented any charters from being realized.

Even factoring in such elements, any evaluation poses challenges. It is possible for a state's law to rank high but, because of a single provision or particular political climate, fail to generate much charter school activity.

* **Massachusetts'** law for example, is an "A" and the charter schools that have started in the state are highly autonomous and innovative. But because of the cap on the number of schools (37 of the more autonomous state-sponsored

schools, 13 of the less autonomous district-sponsored schools), it has yielded significantly fewer charter schools than a number of states ranked below it, including **Texas** and **Florida.**

Despite the occasional exception, however, the table should give a good idea of the extent to which a given state fosters meaningful charter school activity.

The state with the strongest law is **Arizona**, which scored 46.25 out of 50. In that state, an unlimited number of charter schools may be established, virtually any individual or organization may petition to start a charter school (approval subject to rigorous scrutiny by the granting body), and three different types of public agencies local school boards, the State Board of Education, and the specially created State Board for Charter Schools are empowered to authorize charter schools. Full funding follows students to the schools, which are legally and financially autonomous and exempt from state laws and regulations, district policies and collective bargaining agreements. The state has even allocated $1,000,000 for start-up funds.

Arizona's law was passed in 1994, and by April 2000, 352 charter schools were up and running, providing students with innovative, quality educational programs. The accountability checks intrinsic to the charter concept have lead to the swift closure of 18 charters in the state that violated the charter law, as well as additional fiscal monitoring of a few others. The vigorous activity and the correction of problems keep the nation's eyes on the state.

Contrast Arizona's law with that of **Mississippi** (passed in 1995), that merited the only "F" with 1.3 points out of a possible 50. The Mississippi law allows up to six existing public schools to become charter schools. No new schools may be developed, and no one outside the existing public school system may start a charter school. The state board of education is the sole entity that may authorize a charter school, after the school board has approved the concept.

But most of the charter school laws fall somewhere between these poles, varying in significant ways on each issue.

Finally, as policymakers try to capitalize on the growing pool of federal money which has been authorized to help new charter schools grow, there have been attempts to get any kind of law on the books simply to qualify for federal money.

It should also be noted that some states claim to have charter schools when in fact there is no authorizing legislation. Much has been written about **Maryland**, for example, and the notion that several charter schools exist in Baltimore. In reality, these schools are not autonomous public schools. They were given freedom from a limited number of rules and are very effective in their mission, but they are still beholden to the school district for their livelihood. Like **Puerto Rico** which is also often mentioned as a charter "state," Maryland does not have a charter school law.

The Value of Knowing a Strong — and a Weak — Law

The legislative analysis of each state's charter law and ensuing ranking is important for several reasons. Each provides a guidepost as to what kind of charter activity is likely to occur under certain legislative conditions. And while by no means definitive, it provides a useful yardstick against which to measure and fashion forthcoming legislation and amendments. A state trying to create a healthy supply of charter schools will know to steer clear of the potholes, detours and roadblocks put in place by states on the weaker side of the continuum.

Over the last eight years, as charter legislation has made its way onto the law books from state to state, experts have witnessed a myriad of approaches by state policymakers. The number one impediment to effective policy-making is a lack of awareness of the details and repercussions of various policies, and much can be learned by looking at the path taken by other states, as well as one's own state's previous efforts.

Some lawmakers, having recognized specific pitfalls of their initial efforts to enact a charter law, have revisited and amended their law accordingly. However, the success rate for amending existing charter laws in a substantive way is not high. While **California** and **Florida** have done it, they benefited from a political climate that was unusually conducive at the time, given an initiative threat in the case of the former, and a state commissioner and legislature that agreed nearly 100% in the latter. Most experts concede that it is much better to set in place from the outset an effective law, rather than try to go back at a later date to fix an existing law with amendments.

With that in mind, we hope this document will both serve as a guide to those evaluating their own existing charters laws against other states' for the first time, or revisiting them with an eye toward making potential amendments, as well as provide a primer to help charter activists in the remaining 14 states working to get it right the first time. We are here to help you do just that.

Jeanne Allen
President
The Center for Education Reform

CHARTER SCHOOL LEGISLATION: STATE RANKINGS

CRITERIA	***A***									***B***									
State	AZ	MI	MN	DC	DE	MA	TX	CA	FL	NY	NC	PA	CO	MO	SC	OR	NJ	OK	WI
Year Law Passed	'94	'93	'91	'96	'95	'93	'95	'92	'96	'98	'96	'97	'93	'98	'96	'99	'96	'99	'93
Number of schools allowed	4.5	4.3	5	4.5	3.7	3.3	4	5	3.5	2.3	3.5	5	4.5	2.3	4.5	3.25	4	2.5	5
Multiple chartering authorities	4.5	5	4.5	4	2.4	3.3	3.25	4.5	3.5	3.3	3.5	3.25	3	4	1.5	2	3.3	2	3.5
Eligible charter applicants	5	4.7	5	5	4.4	4.3	4.25	5	5	4	4.5	4.5	4	1	3.5	4.5	4	5	4.6
New starts allowed	4.5	4.7	4.5	5	4.9	5	4.75	4	4	5	4.5	4.5	3.25	4.6	3.5	4	4.3	4.5	4.6
School may be started without evidence of local support	5	5	3.5	3	3.5	4	3.5	3	3	4	3	3.5	3	4	2	5	3	5	2.1
Automatic waiver from state and district laws	4.5	2.7	5	5	4.4	3	5	3	3	5	4	3	3.25	4	4.5	3.5	1	2.5	2.9
Legal/operational autonomy	5	5	4.5	4.5	5	4.7	4	3	3.5	5	3	3	2.75	4.2	3.5	3.5	4.7	1	3
Guaranteed full per-pupil funding	3.5	5	3.5	4.5	5	5	4	4.5	5	2.6	4.5	2.5	3.75	4	5	3.25	2	4	1.4
Fiscal Autonomy	5	5	5	4.5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	3.5	4.5	4	4.5	2.5	5	3	1.8
Exempt from collective bargaining agreement/district work rules	4.75	4	4.5	5	4.9	4.3	4	4	4.5	3.3	3	4	4.5	4	3.5	4.25	2.7	4	1.3
Total	46.25	45.3	45	45	43.2	42	40.75	40	40	39.6	37.5	36.75	36.5	36.1	36	35.75	34	33.5	30.2
RANK 2000	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Rank 1998	1	2	6	3	4	5	9	10	13	7	8	16	12	15	11	NA	17	NA	18
Number of charters Spring 2000	352	173	59	31	5	39	167	239	111	5	75	47	65	18	8	4	48	0	55

Note: The scores on this table are based on the current status of each law (through April 2000). Amendments to the original law, state board regulations, legal rulings, department of education interpretation and actual implementation have all been factored into the ranking. Each state is ranked for each criterion on a scale of 0 to 5, based on how that state's provisions under that criterion support or restrict the development of a significant number of autonomous charter schools (strongly support = 5; strongly restrict = 0), or , in the case of recently passed or amended laws, are likely to do so. States are listed from left to right from stronger to weaker. The laws are also divided into two subsets: strong or moderately effective laws which do or are likely to support at least some significant development of autonomous charter schools, and weak or ineffective laws which have not, and are unlikely to lead to significant charter activity. See the following page for a more detailed explanation of the criteria and rating system. See also analysis of individual states' laws for further explanation of specific provisions.

Each law was scored by a panel of charter school experts: Jeanne Allen, President, The Center for Education Reform; Bruno Manno, Senior Fellow with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Adjunct Fellow with the Hudson Institute. Linda Brown, Director, Pioneer Institute Charter School Resource Center; Chester Finn, President of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation; and John M. Olin Fellow at the Hudson Institute, assisted with the 1997 and 1998 rankings. The average of the panelists score's were sued for the final score for each criterion, and their sum provides the final scores that determined ranking. States with tie scores were ranked according to secondary factors influencing the effectiveness of their law. Edited by Jeanne Allen and Dave DeSchryver. Published by the Center for Education Reform April 2000.

SCORING LEGEND		
Strong	Weak	NA
40-50 = A	20 – 29 = C	0 – 9 = F
30-39 = B	10-19 = D	

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CHARTER SCHOOL LEGISLATION: STATE RANKINGS

CRITERIA	***C***										***D***							***F***
State	IL	NH	GA	OH	LA	ID	NV	CT	UT	AK	NM	HI	WY	RI	AR	VA	KS	MS
Year Law Passed	'96	'95	'93	'97	'95	'98	'97	'96	'98	'95	'93	'94	'95	'95	'95	'98	'94	'97
Number of schools allowed	2	1.7	5	1.7	2	2.6	2.5	2.5	0.6	2.3	2.5	1	5	1	2.5	1.6	0.7	0
Multiple chartering authorities	1	0.7	1	2.7	2.5	1.3	1	2.5	2	0.3	2.25	1	0	1	1	1	0	0
Eligible charter applicants	4	3.7	4	3	3.5	3	2	1.5	4.3	4.7	2	1.5	4.3	2.5	2.5	2.6	4.3	0
New starts allowed	3.5	3.7	4	2.7	4	4.8	4.5	3.5	4.1	5	3.5	3	4	4	3.5	2.3	4.7	0
School may be started without evidence of local support	1	0	2.5	4.7	2	1	5	1	2.5	1.3	3	2	1.7	0	2.5	2.6	1	0
Automatic waiver from state and district laws	3	4.7	5	3	2.5	4.3	2.5	2.5	0.6	0	0.5	4.5	0	0.5	0	0.6	0.3	1.3
Legal/operational autonomy	3	3.7	0	1.7	1	0	1.5	0.5	1.6	0	0	0.5	0	0.5	0	0.6	0	0
Guaranteed full per-pupil funding	3	0	2	2.7	3	3	3.5	3.5	0.3	3.3	3	1.5	0	3.5	1.5	0.6	0.3	0
Fiscal Autonomy	3.5	5	2	2.7	4.5	1.6	1	3	1.3	4	2	1	0	1.5	0	0	0	0
Exempt from collective bargaining agreement/district work rules	4	4.7	1.5	2.3	1.5	4	2	2.5	4.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	28	27.7	27	27	26.5	25.6	25.5	23	21.6	21	18.75	16	15	14.5	13.5	11.9	11.3	1.3
RANK 2000	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37
Rank 1998	20	19	21	23	14	24	27	22	25	26	33	32	29	28	34	30	31	35
Number of charters Spring 2000	19	0	32	48	17	8	5	16	3	17	3	2	0	2	0	0	15	1

RATING CRITERIA

All 37 charter school laws in existence as of April 2000 are scored and ranked according to their degree of expansiveness. The states are ranked from 1 (most expansive) to 37 (most restrictive), as well as divided into Strong and Weak Charter Law States, indicating which do or are likely to support at least some significant development of autonomous charter schools, and which do not.

Number of Schools: States that permit an unlimited or substantial number of autonomous charter schools encourage more activity than states that either limit the number of autonomous schools, or allow an unlimited number of charter schools with restrictions on their autonomy, demographics, etc.

Multiple chartering authorities/multiple appeals process: States that permit a number of entities in addition to or instead of local school boards to authorize charter schools, or that provide applicants with a binding appeals process, encourage more activity than those that vest authorizing power in a single entity, particularly if that entity is the local school board, or provide only an advisory appeals process

Variety of applicants: States that permit a variety of individuals and groups both inside and outside the existing public school system to start charter schools encourage more activity than states that limit eligible applicants to public schools or public school personnel.

New starts: States that permit new schools to start up encourage more activity than those that permit only public school conversions.

Formal evidence of local support: States that permit charter schools to be formed without having to prove specified levels of local support encourage more activity than states that require such demonstrations of support.

Automatic waiver from laws and regulations: States that provide automatic blanket waivers from most or all state and district education laws, regulations, and policies encourage more activity than states that provide no waivers or require charter schools to negotiate waivers on an issue-by-issue basis with charter-granting authorities. (In no case, however, are civil rights laws or health/safety codes waived for charter schools)

Fiscal Autonomy: State that give charter schools full control over their own budgets. Without the district holding the funds, encourage more activity than states that do not.

Legal/operational autonomy: States in which charter schools are independent legal entities that can own property, sue and be sued, incur debt, control budget and personnel, and contract for services encourage more activity than states in which charter school remain under district jurisdiction. In addition, legal autonomy refers to the ability of charter schools to control enrollment numbers, with no special conditions imposed by the charter law or the local district on its policies.

Guaranteed full funding: States where 100% of per-pupil funding automatically follows student enrolled in charter schools encourage more activity than states where the amount of funding is automatically not below 100%, or must be negotiated with the district.

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CHARTER SCHOOL LAWS AND PROFILES

Alaska (1995) The 9th weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	30
Number of Schools Operating (As of Spring 2000)	17
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards
Eligible Applicants	Any individual or group
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, converted private, new starts, home-based schools
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	Established by districts
Recipient of Charter	Applicant
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No; exemptions from particular laws, regulations, and policies must be specified in charter
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	Academic policy committee composed of parents, students, teachers, and other school employees
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter school may be managed or operated by a for profit organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations
Transportation for Students	Provided by district
Facilities Assistance	Charter school may operate in a vacant school-district building if superintendent determines that it meets health and safety requirements
Technical Assistance	State assistance provided with application process
Reporting Requirements	District option
Funding	
Amount	100% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue, minus a portion for administrative costs (determined by applying an indirect cost rate approved by the department of education). Estimated portion is about $7,000
Path	Through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	No state funding; federal charter school funding is being applied to start-up costs

Alaska (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Charter school teachers are covered by district bargaining agreement
Certification	Required
Leave of Absence from District	Not necessary (charter school teachers are employees of district)
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	Students in district
Preference for Enrollment	Subject to district policy
Enrollment Requirements	Not permitted
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Charter school and local school board must try and accommodate excess applicants by providing additional space and attracting additional teachers to the charter school; if all students cannot be accommodated, a lottery will be used
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Statewide assessments; district may require other assessments

Arizona (1994, Impacted* 1999) The strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	Maximum of 25 schools per year authorized by state board of education and 25 by state board for charter schools; no limit on charter schools sponsored by local school boards
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	352
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards, state board of education, state board for charter schools (created by legislation)
Eligible Applicants	Public body, private person, private organization
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, converted private, new starts (but not home-based schools)
Appeals Process	Petition may be submitted to alternative chartering authority
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	None
Recipient of Charter	Legal entity applying for charter
Term of Initial Charter	15 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes
Legal Autonomy	Yes
Governance	Governing board
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Yes
Transportation for Students	For charter schools authorized by local school boards, transportation may be provided by the district; other charter schools receive state transportation aid to provide transportation for students
Facilities Assistance	Department of education must publish list of vacant buildings owned by state that are suitable for charter schools. Non-profit charter schools may apply for financing from Industrial Development Authorities
Technical Assistance	Offered through department of education
Reporting Requirements	Charter schools, like all schools in state, must prepare an annual report card for parents and the department of education; charter schools must also undergo an annual audit

* The charter law did not change but legislators passed bills that impacted the law.

Arizona (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	For charter schools authorized by local school boards, funding may be negotiated and is specified in the charter; for other charter schools, funding is determined by the same base support level formula used for all district schools. Estimated portion is about $4,000
Path	For charter schools authorized by local school boards, through district to charter school; for other charter schools, through county treasurer's office to school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	$1,000,000 annually in state funding; federal charter school funding also is being applied to start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Teachers may remain covered by district bargaining agreement, negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing body, or work independently
Certification	Not required
Leave of Absence from District	Up to 3 years
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	All students in state
Preference for Enrollment	District residents (if charter school is sponsored by local school board); siblings
Enrollment Requirements	Not permitted
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Equitable selection process such as a lottery
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Charter school students must participate in tests adopted by state board of education to measure progress toward statewide student outcomes, including national norm-referenced tests
Other Features	
Location of Charter School	Local school board may authorize charter school outside the district boundaries

Arkansas (1995, amended March 1999) The 4th weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	12 open enrollment schools; no more than three per congressional district. No limit on conversions
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	0
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school board for conversions; local board for new starts (but see appeals process)
Eligible Applicants	Non profits, governments, and colleges; conversions must be created by the district. No private or parochial elementary or secondary school in existence on July 30, 1999, shall be eligible for open-enrollment charter school status
Types of Charter Schools	Conversions and new starts
Appeals Process	The state board has final authority on open enrollment charter schools. Local denials of conversion schools cannot be overturned
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	Public hearing required
Recipient of Charter	For conversions, the school district superintendent. For new starts, the chief operating officer of the charter
Term of Initial Charter	3 years with yearly review
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No, exemptions from particular laws, regulations, and policies must be specified in charter
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	Not addressed
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	No
Transportation for Students	Maybe provided by the district, but transportation funds do not follow the child
Facilities Assistance	Not addressed
Technical Assistance	Department of education may provide technical assistance to teachers in developing a petition
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must prepare annual report for parents, local school board, and state board of education; state board must prepare biennial report for legislature
Funding	
Amount	Specified in charter
Path	Through the district to the school
Fiscal Autonomy	No
Start-up Funds	No state funding

Arkansas (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Charters are covered by district bargaining agreements
Certification	Required
Leave of Absence from District	Not addressed
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	Conversion school students attending existing schools prior to conversion. Open enrollment charters may draw students from across public school district boundaries
Preference for Enrollment	No school district with an enrollment of less than five hundred (500) students in existence on July 30, 1999, shall be eligible for open-enrollment charter school status
Enrollment Requirements	The State Board of Education shall develop a process to measure the likely impact of a proposed charter school on desegregation efforts
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Not addressed, the state board of education will likely regulate a lottery process in conjunction with desegregation efforts
At-Risk Provisions	The state board gives preference to applications to schools from high-at-risk districts
Racial Balance Provisions	Charter schools must not hamper desegregation efforts
Accountability	Statewide assessments for all schools
Other Features	
Law's Language	The law's language is very prescriptive for application and oversight

California (1992, amended 1998, impacted 1999) The 8th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	350, to increase by 100 each year
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	239
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards
Eligible Applicants	One or more persons
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts, home-based schools (but not converted private)
Appeals Process	Charter denied by local school board may be appealed to county board of education (if it approves charter, it becomes chartering authority), then to State Board if denied by county board of education
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For new starts, at least 50% of teachers in a school or at least 50% of parents or guardians. For conversion, more than 50% of the permanent status teachers currently employed at the public school
Recipient of Charter	Entity described in the charter
Term of Initial Charter	5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes from state; no from district (exemptions from particular district policies must be negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter)
Legal Autonomy	Yes , may organize as a non-profit independent from district
Governance	Specified in charter, but must ensure parental involvement
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Not yet clear
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Yes
Transportation for Students	Specified in charter (however, the department of education interpretation is that charter school students are entitled to transportation)
Facilities Assistance	Not addressed
Technical Assistance	Not addressed
Funding	
Amount	100% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue. Estimated portion is about $4,000
Path	Charters choose to receive their funds directly from the state or through the district
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes. Negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter
Start-up Funds	Revolving loan fund that is capped at $250,000 and allows charters to apply for loans on their own behalf with up to five years for repayment

California (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Charter teachers have the same option to form a union as other state employees. They may remain covered by district bargaining agreement, negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing body, or work independently. If they are independent, they are generally subject to the state's education labor laws
Certification	Teachers in charter schools shall be required to hold a Commission on Teacher Credentialing certificate, permit, or other required certification document
Leave of Absence from District	Specified in charter
Retirement Benefits	If a charter school chooses to participate in the State Teacher's Retirement System, all qualified employees shall be covered
Students	
Eligible Students	All students in state
Preference for Enrollment	The law allows for sibling and residence preference. Other preference may be admitted, based on individual basis
Enrollment Requirements	A charter school shall admit all pupils who wish to attend the school
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Schools use some form of an admissions drawing or lottery if applications
At-Risk Provisions	Priority in the approval process is given to schools designed to serve low-achieving students
Racial Balance Provisions	Charter must specify means by which school's student body will reflect racial and ethnic balance of the general population living in the school district
Accountability	Charter schools shall meet all statewide standards and conduct the pupil assessments required in non charter public schools. Legislative Analyst shall contract a neutral evaluator for a study of the effectiveness of the charter school approach by July 2003
Other Features	
Attendance Accounting	Schools must develop an auditable attendance accounting system. Non-classroom based instruction based charters (such as internet based schools) must comply with prescriptive "independent study" attendance practices
District-wide Charters	A district may convert all its schools to charter schools if at least 50% of teachers in district sign the charter petition and if state board of education and state superintendent of public instruction approve

Colorado (1993, amended 1997, 1998, and March 1999) The 13th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	No limit statewide, but local boards may "reasonably limit" the number of charters in their district
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	65
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards
Eligible Applicants	Any person or organization (for profit or non-profit), and allows for the formation of on-line charter schools for students previously in public schools
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	Denied charter may be appealed to state board of education, which may remand the decision back to local school board for reconsideration; a second denial may be appealed to the state board, which may instruct the local board to approve the charter
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	"Adequate" number of teachers, parents, and/or students must support; application procedures may be adopted by local school board
Recipient of Charter	Applicant
Term of Initial Charter	3-5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No; exemptions from district policies must be negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter, and waivers from state statutes must be granted by state board of education; in practice, however, waivers from state statutes are invariably granted upon request, and many districts grant charter schools wholesale waivers from district policy as well
Legal Autonomy	Charter schools are officially part of the school district, but may form as a non-profit organization and operate with considerable autonomy. Funding and services are negotiated
Governance	Specified in charter
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Yes
Transportation for Students	Specified in charter
Facilities Assistance	If space is available in district facility, charter school may not be charged for that space (other costs for facilities operations and maintenance are to be negotiated). The Educational and Cultural Facility Authority may issue bonds on behalf of charter schools
Technical Assistance	Not addressed
Reporting Requirements	Charter school renewal application must include a report on school's progress in meeting its educational goals; state board of education must prepare a report for the legislature comparing performance of charter school students with that of comparable students in other public schools and reviewing the regulations and policies for which waivers were sought

Colorado (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	Effective 2000-2001, a minimum of 95% of average per pupil revenue follows the student. Charter schools may seek bonds at a public rate. In districts of 500 or fewer, at least 85% of district per-pupil revenue is guaranteed. Estimated portion is about $4,000
Path	Through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes, relationship negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter
Start-up Funds	No state funding; federal charter school funding is being applied to start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Teachers may remain covered by district bargaining agreement, negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing body, or work independently
Certification	Required (but is often waived)
Leave of Absence from District	Up to 3 years
Retirement Benefits	Yes, charter law mandates that charter school employees be part of the state retirement system
Students	
Eligible Students	All students in state
Preference for Enrollment	Students in district where charter school is located
Enrollment Requirements	Not permitted
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Enrollment decision made in a non-discriminatory manner specified in charter (e.g., first-come-first-served, lottery)
At-Risk Provisions	Priority in the approval process must be given to schools designed to serve low-achieving students
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Charter schools must meet or exceed district content and assessment standards; charter school students must take same statewide tests as other public school students
Other Features	
Hybrid Opportunities	Provisions in Colorado's education code unrelated to the charter school law, coupled with the ingenuity of applicants and local school boards, have resulted in more charter school activity than might be expected from Colorado's below-average rank on the scale of expansiveness
Federal Service Provisions	Federally mandated services must be provided by the district at the same basis as they are to traditional public schools

Connecticut (1996, amended 1997, and June 1999) The 11th weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	24
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	16
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	State board of education (local charter schools must first get approval by the local school board)
Eligible Applicants	Any person, group, local or regional school board, or regional educational service center; state board must give preference to applicants in districts with 75% or more minority enrollment, districts with a significant at-risk population ("priority" districts), and proposed state charters located at a work-site or proposed by institutions of higher learning
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public schools or new starts (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For local charter schools, there must be a public hearing and survey to determine interest, and they must be approved by the local school board; for state charter schools, there must be a public hearing in affected district and solicitation of comments from local school board and contiguous school boards
Recipient of Charter	Applicant
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No, requests for exemptions from particular laws, regulations, and policies may be granted by the state board
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	Governing council as specified in charter; teachers and parents of students, however, must be represented
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations
Transportation for Students	For students residing in the district in which the charter is located, transportation is provided by district unless other arrangements are specified in charter; districts, at their discretion, may provide transportation for resident students attending a charter outside their district and will be reimbursed for reasonable costs for such services by the state
Facilities Assistance	Not addressed in law, but charter schools may apply for low-interest loans from CT Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA)

Connecticut (cont.)	
Technical Assistance	Not addressed
Reporting Requirements	Local charters must prepare annual school profile for local school board and commissioner of education; state charters must prepare annual school profile for commissioner; commissioner must prepare annual report for legislature on operation of charter schools
Funding	
Amount	For local charters, specified in charter; for state charters, 110% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue (about $6,500). However, funding is directly dependent on state's annual appropriation
Path	For local charters, through district to charter school; for state charters, directly to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes, but state officials still maintain some control over funding
Start-up Funds	No state funding; federal charter school funding will be applied to start-up costs; charters are eligible for competitive state grants
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	For local charters, charter school teachers are covered by district bargaining agreement, but agreement may be modified by majority of charter school teachers and governing council; for state charters, teachers may negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing council or work independently
Certification	Up to 50% of teachers in charter school may have alternative certification or temporary certification and be working toward standard certification; the other 50% must have regular certification
Leave of Absence from District	Up to 4 years
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	All students in state; however charters may enroll no more than 250 students for K-8, and no more than 300 or 25% of enrollment in a district , whichever is less
Preference for Enrollment	Local charters may give preference to students in district; all charter schools may give preference to siblings of students in school
Enrollment Requirements	No enrollment requirements are permitted, but charter schools are encouraged to target at-risk students
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	Preference in approving charter schools must be given to applicants for schools to be located in districts with a significant at-risk population (identified as "priority" districts)
Racial Balance Provisions	In response to the recent state Supreme Court desegregation decision, charter school applicants must describe student enrollment criteria and procedures to promote a diverse student body, and document efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity of staff
Accountability	Statewide mastery examinations. Renewal may involve an independent appraisal of the school

Delaware (1995, amended 1998, clarified July 1999) The 5th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	Unlimited
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	5
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards for conversions; local school boards or state board of education for new starts
Eligible Applicants	Any person, university, college, or non-religious, non-home-based entity
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For conversions, 50% of teachers and 50% of parents at school must support
Recipient of Charter	Charter school board of directors
Term of Initial Charter	3 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes
Legal Autonomy	Yes
Governance	Board of directors including teachers and parents. School board of directors cannot also be an elected member of a local school board of education. Charter school may enter a contract with a religious or sectarian college or university that offers a nonsectarian teacher education program if the services are used in a nonsectarian manner
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	For-profit corporation may operate a charter school directly
Transportation for Students	Provided by district or charter school; if school provides transportation, it receives state transportation aid
Facilities Assistance	District must make unused buildings available for charter schools (and bargain in good faith over rent); Department of Education and Department of Administrative Services must publish list of all vacant buildings owned by the state or school districts that may be suitable for charter schools
Technical Assistance	Provided by Department of Education upon request
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must prepare annual report for chartering authority, Department of Education, and State Board of Education; Department of Education must prepare annual report for legislature and governor and propose changes in law
Funding	
Amount	100% of computed state funding based on state unit funding formula and 100% of local funding based on previous year per-pupil expenditure (in students' district of residence) follows students. Estimated portion is about $6,000

Delaware (cont.)	
Path	State portion flows directly to charter school; district portion flows from district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	No state funding; federal charter school funding is being applied to start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Charter school teachers are not covered by district bargaining agreements; they may negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing body or work independently
Certification	Exceptions may be made
Leave of Absence from District	Up to 3 years
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	All students in state
Preference for Enrollment	For conversions, students already attending the school and siblings; both conversions and new starts may allow sibling preference; others may be given preference (students within a 5-mile radius of school, within the district, with specific interest in subject matter, or at risk)
Enrollment Requirements	Students with specific interest in subject matter or teaching philosophy may receive preference; charter school may set reasonable academic and disciplinary standards for students to remain enrolled
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	At-risk students may be given preference for enrollment; each charter must describe strategies to meet needs of at-risk and special education students; requirement that charter school serve at least 200 students may be waived if school targets at-risk or special education students
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Charter schools must use same assessments regular public schools are required to use (and may use others in addition)
Other Features	
Size	Charter schools must have at least two grades and serve at least 200 students (with some exceptions)

District of Columbia (1996; clarified 1999) The 4th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	20 per year (up to 10 each by the two existing chartering authorities)
Number of Schools Operating (As of Spring 2000)	31
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	District of Columbia Board of Education and the newly formed Public Charter School Board; the District of Columbia Council may designate an additional entity by enactment of a bill
Eligible Applicants	Person, group, organization, or post-secondary institution, including public, private, or quasi-private entities
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, converted private, new starts (but not home-based schools)
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For conversions, two thirds of teachers, two thirds of parents of minor students, and two thirds of adult students at pre-existing school must support
Recipient of Charter	Applicant
Term of Initial Charter	15 years, with at least one review every 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes
Legal Autonomy	Varies - dependent upon district cooperation
Governance	Board of trustees as specified in charter; board must have an odd number of members not to exceed 7 and must include at least 2 parents of enrolled students; majority of board members must be D.C. residents
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Not addressed
Charter School May Earn a Profit	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations
Transportation for Students	Charter school students, like regular public school students, are eligible for reduced public transportation fares
Facilities Assistance	Preference over vacant district buildings
Technical Assistance	Not addressed
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must prepare annual report for chartering authority and District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority
Funding	
Amount	100% of operations funding follows students, based on D.C. per-pupil formula. Estimated portion is about $5,000

District of Columbia (cont.)	
Path	Directly to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes, but district still maintains some control over funding
Start-up Funds	Start-up funding based on RFP submitted to the district; federal charter school funding also is being applied to start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Teachers may negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing body or work independently
Certification	Not required
Leave of Absence from District	2 years (an additional 2-year extension is possible)
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	All D.C. students
Preference for Enrollment	Students attending a school prior to conversion; students in the attendance boundary of former public school; siblings
Enrollment Requirements	Charter school may not limit enrollment based on academic ability or achievement, but may limit enrollment based on the area of focus of the school (e.g., mathematics or the arts)
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Random selection process
At-Risk Provisions	Chartering authorities are to give preference to schools that target students with special needs
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Any districtwide assessments that are developed by school board
Other Features	
Accreditation	Charter school must obtain accreditation from an accrediting body deemed appropriate by the chartering authority (e.g., Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Virginia Association of Independent Schools, American Montessori Internationale); if school includes preschool or kindergarten, it must be licensed as a child development center by D.C. government

Florida (1996, amended 1997, 1998, and 1999) The 9th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	28 in each district that has 100,000 or more students; 20 in each district that has 50,000 to 99,000 students; 12 in each district with fewer than 50,000 students.
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	111
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards; A district school board may sponsor a charter school in the county over which the board has jurisdiction
Eligible Applicants	Individuals, teachers, parents, or a legal entity including a municipality or municipalities of 25,000 or more
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts (but not directly converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	Denied charters may be appealed to state board of education (local board may refuse state board's recommendation if it can prove legally to state board that so doing would be contrary to law or to the best interest of students or community)
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For conversions, 50% of teachers and 50% of parents must support
Recipient of Charter	Governing board of charter school (all charter schools in Florida organize as non-profit corporations) and non-profit organizations
Term of Initial Charter	3, 4, or 5 years with renewal every 5 years. Non-profits are eligible for up to a 10-year charter, and charters operating for 3 years can renew for a 15 year term to facilitate financing
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Negotiated in charter, but flexibility is encouraged
Legal Autonomy	Yes
Governance	Specified in charter, including charter school's status as public or private employer, or governing body appointed by the municipality governing body
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations but may contract with charter holder
Transportation for Students	It is encouraged but not required. Provided by charter school for students within a reasonable distance of school (may involve agreement or contract with district, private provider, parents, or any combination thereof); transportation must not be a barrier to equal access
Facilities Assistance	Available district facilities or property may be made available to charter schools, but must be done so on the same basis as they are made available to other public schools in the district. A charter school capital outlay trust fund was established
Technical Assistance	Department of education may provide technical assistance upon request

Florida (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	100% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue; fees for administrative services may not exceed 5% of total funding. Estimated portion is about $4,000
Path	Through district to charter school (district is merely a pass-through agent)
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	The Commissioner of Education shall allocate capital outlay funding provided by the legislature
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Teachers may remain covered by district bargaining agreement, negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing body, or work independently
Certification	Not required (law allows charter schools to employ or contract with qualified, noncertified teachers, based on a section of the Florida code that allows regular public schools to do the same)
Leave of Absence from District	Charter school teachers may take leave of absence if local school board approves
Retirement Benefits	May participate in retirement system if organized as a public employee and application is approved
Students	
Eligible Students	Students in district (interdistrict transfer agreements may be honored for charter schools as for regular public schools)
Preference for Enrollment	For conversions, students enrolled in public school prior to conversion; for all charter schools, siblings and children of school's employees; charter schools may give preference for enrollment to at-risk students
Enrollment Requirements	Not permitted (except to enroll at-risk students)
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	Charter schools may give preference for enrollment to at-risk students
Racial Balance Provisions	Charter school must strive to reflect racial/ethnic balance of community or of other district schools
Accountability	Charter schools must participate in the statewide assessment program (and may use other assessments). Each charter school must prepare annual progress report for chartering authority, state board, state commissioner, and legislature; department of education must prepare report for state board, commissioner, and legislature comparing test scores of charter school students with test scores of comparable students in the district
Other Features	
Charter Districts	Up to six charter districts are allowed and priority is given to Hillsborough and Volusia Counties upon the submission of a completed precharter agreement or charter proposal for a charter school district
Charters in the Workplace	Businesses are encouraged to form business partnership schools or satellite learning centers through charter school status
Limit on Multiple Charters	No organization may operate more than 1 elementary, 1 middle, and 1 high school charter school per district and no more than 15 statewide (though within a district, a single charter may involve multiple sites)
Private School Conversions	Although a private school may not convert directly to a charter school, it may disband, reincorporate as a charter school, and open enrollments to all students in district (with no preference for students previously in the school)

Georgia (1993, amended 1998) The 16th weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	No limit
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	32
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school board
Eligible Applicants	Individuals, organizations, or state or local public entities
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public and new starts
Appeals Process	State board of education may mediate if local school board refuses to approve charter, but may not overturn that decision
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	Majority of teachers and parents at school for conversion must submit petition to local board
Recipient of Charter	Applying organization
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 5 years, as specified in the charter
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes, exempt from state laws and local regulations, policies and procedures
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	The majority of members shall be parents of students enrolled at the school
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	No
Transportation for Students	Provided by district where feasible
Facilities Assistance	At district discretion
Technical Assistance	Department of education is directed to assist schools in creating and modifying charter petitions

Georgia (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	Negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter
Path	Through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter
Start-up Funds	$5,000 competitive state grants to each of 10 schools for planning; federal charter school funding is being applied to start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Georgia is not a collective bargaining state; details of employment specified in the charter
Certification	Specified in the charter
Leave of Absence from District	Specified in the charter
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	Specified in charter (but usually limited to students in attendance area, but students may be accepted from outside the charter school district)
Preference for Enrollment	Students in attendance area and siblings of resident students currently enrolled in the charter school
Enrollment Requirements	Not permitted
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Random selection as specified in charter
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	A plan for improvement that addresses how the charter petitioner proposes to improve student learning and meet minimum state standards Charter school must prepare annual report for local school board, state board of education, and parents; state board of education must report each year to legislature
Other Features	
Incentives	Charter schools are given preference by state board of education in distributing certain state grant funds

Hawaii (1994, amended July 1998, May 1999) The 7th weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	25
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	2
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	State board of education (same as LEA)
Eligible Applicants	Any public school, community or any program within an existing school
Types of Charter Schools	Converted, new start
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	60% of teachers, 60% of support staff, and 60% of parents at school must support
Recipient of Charter	The authors of the letter of intent for a new school or the board of an existing public school
Term of Initial Charter	4 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes
Legal Autonomy	No, the schools are attached to the board of education for administrative purposes
Governance	Board must be composed of at least one principal, teacher, support staff member, parent, student, and community member
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Not addressed
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	No
Transportation for Students	Yes
Facilities Assistance	No, may apply for supplemental grants as all public schools
Technical Assistance	Encouraged in conversions. The superintendent shall provide guidance to new starts in formulating a required implementation plan
Reporting Requirements	Charter schools must conduct annual self-evaluations
Funding	
Amount	As determined annually, based on per-pupil funding but not guaranteed. Estimated portion is about $3,000
Path	From state to charter school (there are no local school districts in Hawaii)
Fiscal Autonomy	No
Start-up Funds	No state or federal funding

Hawaii (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Collective bargaining agreements apply to all charters
Certification	Required
Leave of Absence from District	Not necessary (charter school teachers remain employees of the statewide district)
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	Students in attendance area of public school prior to conversion
Preference for Enrollment	Not applicable (no choice involved)
Enrollment Requirements	Not applicable
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Not applicable
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Charter schools will provide a plan for student assessment that has equal or more rigor than the state standards

Idaho (1998) The 13th weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Charters Allowed	Not more than 60 in the first five years, and not more than 12 schools may be approved in any one year, and not more than two charters per year may be granted within an educational classification region, and not more than one charter may be granted for any one school district in a year, and no whole school district may be converted to a charter district
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	8
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school board
Eligible Applicants	Any person
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts
Appeals Process	The state superintendent of public instruction selects a hearing officer to review the action of the local board of trustees. The hearing officer shall submit a written recommendation to the local board of trustees and to the persons requesting the review. The recommendation is not binding
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For conversions, 60% of teachers and 60% of parents and guardians. For new starts, a petition signed by more than 30 qualified electors of the district
Recipient of Charter	Applicant/non-profit
Term of Initial Charter	5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	Specified in charter
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	For-profits may not operate charters and it is unclear whether they can be contracted for services
Transportation for Students	Same as traditional public school. Transportation support paid to the charter school students living more than one and one-half (1 1/2) miles from the school

Idaho (cont.)	
Facilities Assistance	None
Technical Assistance	State Department of education shall provide same assistance as given to other public schools
Reporting Requirements	Financial
Funding	
Amount	Per student support. Computation of support units for each charter school shall be calculated according to the Idaho Code. Funding from the state educational support program shall be equal to the total distribution factor, plus the salary-based apportionment provided in Idaho Code. Estimated portion is about $6,000 but varies with apportionment calculations
Path	Same manner as other public schools, through the district
Fiscal Autonomy	Unclear, depends upon the amount of control exercised by the school board
Start-up Funds	No, but provides an advance against latter payments to assist the school with initial start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Staff of the charter school shall be considered a separate unit for purposes of collective bargaining
Certification	Teacher certification required
Leave of Absence from District	Specified in charter
Retirement Benefits	Specified in charter
Students	
Eligible Students	All Students
Preference for Enrollment	Preference for enrollment to children in attendance area
Enrollment Requirements	Not applicable
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery or other random method
Accountability	Charters must operate in accordance with the state education standards

Illinois (1996, amended March 1999) The 19th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	45 total; maximum of 15 in Chicago, 15 in Chicago suburbs, and 15 in rest of state
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	19
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards
Eligible Applicants	Individual or organization including parents, educators, existing public schools, businesses, colleges, universities, community-based organizations, or partnerships among these
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	Denied charters may be appealed to the state board of education whose decision is binding
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	Conversion must demonstrate majority support among teachers and parents (and local school councils, if applicable); new starts must give evidence that all seats will be filled; preference is to be given to charter schools that demonstrate high level of student, parent, teacher, and community support; charter must include evidence that proposal is economically sound for both school and district
Recipient of Charter	Charter school governing body (entity must be an Illinois non-profit corporation)
Term of Initial Charter	3 to 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes
Legal Autonomy	Yes
Governance	Specified in charter (non-profits are required to have a board of directors of at least 3 members)
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations
Transportation for Students	Means by which charter school will meet transportation needs of its students, including low-income and at-risk students, is specified in charter
Facilities Assistance	For conversions, school building is provided by district at no charge
Technical Assistance	State board of education must provide technical assistance to applicants upon request
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must submit an annual financial and administrative audit (conducted by an independent outside auditor); local school board must submit annual evaluations of charter schools to state board of education; state board must submit annual report to legislature and governor comparing performance of charter school students with that of comparable students in other public schools and reviewing exemptions from state laws for charter schools

Illinois (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	Negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter, but not less than 75% or more than 125% of per-capita student tuition of district in which charter school is located. Estimated portion is about $6,000
Path	Through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	Charter school loan fund available
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Charter school teachers may remain covered by district bargaining agreement, negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing body, or work independently
Certification	Charter schools may employ uncertified teachers if they have a bachelor's degree, 5 years experience in area of degree, passing score on state teacher tests, and evidence of professional growth; mentoring must be provided to uncertified teachers
Leave of Absence from District	Up to 5 years
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	Students in district
Preference for Enrollment	For conversions, students enrolled in former public school; siblings
Enrollment Requirements	Only those that may be used by a school district
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	Preference in approval process is given to schools designed to serve substantial proportion of at-risk children
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Statewide goals, standards, and assessments
Other Features	
Joint Charter	Two or more local school boards may issue a joint charter for a single charter school
Other	Impact aid available to districts for 90%, 65%, 35% in years 1,2,3

Kansas (1994) The 2nd weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	15
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	15
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards (subject to state board of education review for compliance with law)
Eligible Applicants	School or school district employee groups, educational services contractors, other persons or entities
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	Charter must describe interest on the part of district employees, parents, and community members
Recipient of Charter	Applicant
Term of Initial Charter	3 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No, exemptions from particular laws, regulations, and policies must be negotiated and specified in charter
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	Specified in charter (but ultimate control over charter school remains with school district)
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	No
Transportation for Students	District must provide transportation for students who qualify for the free-lunch program and live 2 miles or more from the school, and may provide transportation for other students
Facilities Assistance	None
Technical Assistance	Department of education must provide, upon request, technical assistance to charter school applicants
Reporting Requirements	Each year, local school boards must evaluate impact of charter schools on district educational system; those evaluations are compiled by state board of education and submitted to legislature and governor
Funding	
Amount	Discretion of district, estimated portion is about $3,700
Path	Through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	No

Kansas (cont.)	
Start-up Funds	No state funding; federal charter school funding may be applied to start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Teachers remain covered by district bargaining agreement (waiver may be granted if specified in charter)
Certification	Required (waiver may be granted if specified in charter)
Leave of Absence from District	Specified in charter
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	Specified in charter (Kansas has a statewide open enrollment law for consenting districts, so statewide eligibility is possible)
Preference for Enrollment	Specified in charter
Enrollment Requirements	Specified in charter
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	In funding district enhancement plans, state board of education must give preference to those plans that include the establishment of charter schools designed to serve at-risk students
Racial Balance Provisions	Composition of student body must approximate racial and socio-economic composition of district
Accountability	Charter must describe manner of student participation in state assessment program

Louisiana (1995, amended 1997, July 1999) The 14th weakest of the nation's 37 charter school laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	42 statewide
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	17
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school board
Eligible Applicants	Group of 3 or more teachers, or one of the following, as long as it includes 3 or more teachers: (a) 10 or more citizens, (b) public service organization, (c) business, or (d) college or university
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	State board of education, who can grant charters on appeal
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For conversions, two thirds of faculty/staff and majority of parents must support
Recipient of Charter	Authorized representative of non-profit organization (all charter schools in state organize as non-profits)
Term of Initial Charter	5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes, but federal desegregation orders have interfered with the charters ability to operate independently
Legal Autonomy	Yes, but autonomy may depend on the district
Governance	Specified in charter
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charter school must be non-profit, but may contract with a for-profit organization to run the school
Transportation for Students	Specified in charter
Facilities Assistance	School boards are directed to make unused facilities and their contents available to charters at fair market value, and at no cost for charter schools not constructed with local board money
Technical Assistance	Department of education provides technical assistance to applicants
Funding	
Amount	For charters approved by the local board, 100% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue; for charters approved by the state board, schools receive 100% of funding, in the amount of the average per-pupil revenue of their resident district, directly from the state (state-approved charters receive no district funds). Estimated portion is about $4,700
Path	Through the district for charter school approved by the local school board; through the state for schools approved by the state board of education
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	$3 million no-interest loan fund has been established by the state; federal charter school funding is being applied to start-up costs

Louisiana (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Charter school teachers are covered by district bargaining agreement, unless exemption is negotiated with sponsor and specified in charter
Certification	25% of teachers may be non-certified if they meet one of the following two requirements: (a) they are authorized to teach temporarily while seeking a permanent license, or (b) they have a bachelor's degree or 10 years teaching experience, demonstrate expertise in their field, and teach under the supervision of a certified teacher
Leave of Absence from District	Up to 3 years
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	For locally-sponsored charters, students in district; for state-sponsored charters, all students in state
Preference for Enrollment	None
Enrollment Requirements	Charter schools may not base enrollment on academic ability; they may establish enrollment requirements related to their specific mission (such as interest in theater for a performing arts school)
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	Percentage of at-risk students in charter school must not be less than percentage in district as a whole; proposal must describe how at-risk students will be served
Racial Balance Provisions	Must meet any desegregation orders in effect for district
Accountability	Same statewide student assessment required of all public school students; charter school will lose charter after 5 years unless it can demonstrate improvement in standardized test scores Charter school must report to parents, community, local school board, and state board of education at end of each semester regarding progress toward performance objectives; school must prepare more comprehensive reports at end of third year; local school board must report annually to state board; state board must report to legislature and governor by 2001, comparing performance of charter school students with that of other students

Massachusetts (1993, amended 1997) The 6th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	37 state-approved charters, called "Commonwealth" charters; 13 district conversion charters, called "Horace Mann" schools
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	39
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	State board of education for Commonwealth start-up charters; jointly by local school committee, local teacher union and state board of education for Horace Mann conversions
Eligible Applicants	Applicants may include (but are not limited to) non-profit organizations, 2 or more certified teachers, 10 or more parents
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public and start-ups (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	Horace Mann conversions must be approved by the local school committee and the local teacher union; for Commonwealth charters, preference may be given to schools that demonstrate local support
Recipient of Charter	Governing board of charter school
Term of Initial Charter	5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No from state; yes from district for start-ups; negotiated from district for conversions
Legal Autonomy	Yes for Commonwealth charters; negotiated for Horace Mann charters
Governance	Board of trustees
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations, but charter school governing boards may contract with for-profit organizations to run the school
Transportation for Students	Provided for students in district where charter school is located
Facilities Assistance	Not addressed
Technical Assistance	Not addressed
Reporting Requirements	Annual report including audited financial statement and description of progress toward academic goals, as well as state reports required of all other public schools; each charter school must prepare an accountability contract that specifies performance goals and assessment procedures in greater detail than the charter does; state will commission an independent evaluation under direction of state Education Reform Review Commission

Massachusetts (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	100% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average cost per pupil of student's home district; if student lives in an above-foundation district (i.e. wealthier district), charter school receives amount equal to the lesser of (a) average cost per pupil in the home district and (b) average cost per pupil in the district where charter school is located; if student lives in a below-foundation district (i.e. poorer district), charter school receives amount equal to average cost per pupil in the sending district. (see also Funding Cushion, below). Estimated portion is about $6,000
Path	From the state directly to charter schools via deduction from state aid to effected districts
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes for Commonwealth charters; negotiated for Horace Mann charters
Start-up Funds	State planning grants available; also, federal Goals 2000 funding and federal charter school funding have been applied to start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Commonwealth charter school teachers are not covered by local union or district bargaining agreement; Horace Mann charter teachers remain part of the local union, but may negotiate separately on provisions other than salary, benefits and seniority
Certification	Not required for Commonwealth charters; required for Horace Mann charters
Leave of Absence from District	Up to 2 years
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	All students in state
Preference for Enrollment	For commonwealth charter, residents of city or town where charter school is located, and siblings of previously enrolled students; for Horace Mann charters, first to students already enrolled in school and siblings, second to students in the local public school system, and third to other resident students
Enrollment Requirements	Commonwealth charters may serve no more than 2% of statewide public school population (about 18,000 students in 1997-98)
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	Charter granting preference may be given to schools located in poor-performing districts
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Charter schools must meet same performance standards and testing requirements as regular public schools (may use others in addition)
Other Features	
Funding Cushion	Poorer districts reimbursed 100% for students that attend charter schools, subject to budget appropriations; wealthier districts reimbursed 50% the first year, 40% the second year, 30% the third year, and 0% thereafter for students that attend a charter school (starting FY 99, reimbursement scheme will change to 100% - 60% - 40% of incremental costs, for all effected districts); district transfer of funds to Commonwealth schools capped at 6% of district's net school spending; state pays all first year costs for formerly non-public school students enrolling in charter schools

Michigan (1993) The 2nd strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	No limit on number of charters authorized by local school boards, intermediate school boards, or community colleges and state universities. No single university may authorize more than 50% of university total
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	173
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards, intermediate school boards, community colleges, state public universities (all subject to state board of education review for compliance with law)
Eligible Applicants	One or more persons or an entity (partnership, nonprofit organization, labor organization, or any other legal entity)
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, converted private, new starts (but not home-based schools)
Appeals Process	If petition to local school board is rejected, applicant may have it placed on local ballot; applicant denied by any chartering authority may petition a different chartering authority
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	None
Recipient of Charter	Charter school board of directors
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 10 years, with mandatory review at least every 7 years (however, most charters awarded thus far have been for 5 years with 5-year renewal)
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No automatic waivers; charter schools, like regular public schools, may seek waivers on a case-by-case basis from state board of education
Legal Autonomy	Yes
Governance	Board of directors, which may not include charter school employees
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations, but charter schools may contract with for-profit organizations to run the school
Transportation for Students	Not required of any public school (but if transportation is provided for any students it must be provided for all)
Facilities Assistance	Not addressed
Technical Assistance	Intermediate school districts must provide technical assistance to charter schools on same basis as they provide it to local school districts
Reporting Requirements	State board must prepare annual report for legislature that includes, among other items, aggregate test scores of charter school students

Michigan (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	100% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue, not to exceed a certain amount that rises from year to year based on state aid formula (this year's figure is $5,808). Estimated portion is about $5,500
Path	Through chartering authority to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	No state funding; federal charter school funding is being applied to start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Teachers in charter schools authorized by local school boards are covered by district bargaining agreement; other charter school teachers are not; they may negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing body or work independently
Certification	Required, except that faculty at a university or community college may teach in a charter school sponsored by that institution
Leave of Absence from District	No
Retirement Benefits	Employees hired by charter school board are eligible for state retirement benefits; employees hired by for-profit corporation contracting with a charter school are not
Students	
Eligible Students	For charter schools authorized by universities, all students in state; for others, students in district where charter school is located
Preference for Enrollment	Students enrolled in charter school in prior year; siblings of students enrolled in charter school
Enrollment Requirements	Not permitted
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Charter schools must assess student progress with the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (and may use other assessments as well)

Minnesota (1991, amended 1997,May 1999) The 3rd strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	Unlimited
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	59
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards; public post-secondary institutions; private colleges and cooperatives (districts working in conjunction); all subject to state board of education approval; state board of education may grant charters on appeal
Eligible Applicants	Anyone
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, converted private, new starts (but not home-based schools)
Appeals Process	School districts receiving an application must act within 90 days or it goes on appeal to the state. Denied charters may be appealed to the state board of education. The State Board's decision is binding
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For conversions, 60% of licensed personnel of the school must support
Recipient of Charter	Charter school governing board (teachers must form a majority on the board; all charters must be organized as co-op or non-profit)
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 3 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes
Legal Autonomy	Yes
Governance	Requirement that the majority on the board for directors to be licensed teachers from the charter school may be waived. This will be decided by the state board and, subsequently, the commissioner after the state board retires. A person who does not hold a valid administrator license may perform administrative, supervisory, or instructional leadership duties
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations, but charter schools may contract with for-profit organizations to run the school
Transportation for Students	Provided by district or by charter school for students in district where charter school is located; if school provides transportation, it receives state transportation aid; school may reimburse parents outside district for transportation expenses if the family is below federal poverty level
Facilities Assistance	Charter schools may lease space from public or private non-profit, nonsectarian organizations; with approval of department of education, school may lease space from for-profit and sectarian organizations; state grants are available for facility improvement. Lease aid increased to 90% or 1,500 per pupil (appropriation is 2,992,000 in fiscal 2000 and 3,616,000 in fiscal 2001)
Technical Assistance	Not addressed
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must prepare annual report for chartering authority and state board of education; must report to sponsoring body at end of contract, prior to renewal

Minnesota (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	State portion of operations funding follows students, based on average state per-pupil revenue (district portion is lost). Estimated portion is about $6,000
Path	Directly to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	$50,000 start-up grants are available; also, federal charter school funding is being applied to start-up costs; separate grants are available for facility improvement
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Teachers may negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing body or work independently (charter school bargaining unit may remain part of the district unit if teachers, charter school governing board, local school board, and teachers' union in the district agree)
Certification	Required
Leave of Absence from District	Unlimited
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	All students in state
Preference for Enrollment	May be given to students eligible for high school graduation incentives program or to residents of a geographic area with a high concentration of minorities (see "Racial Balance" below)
Enrollment Requirements	Not permitted
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	If charter school limits enrollment to residents of a high-concentration minority area, the school's student body must reflect racial balance of the area
Accountability	Students must meet or exceed outcomes adopted by state board of education for all public school students
Other Features	
Location of Charter School	Local school board may authorize a charter school outside the district boundaries if the district in which the charter school will be located agrees to the arrangement

Mississippi (1997) The weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	6
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	1
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	State board of education (petition must first be approved by local school board)
Eligible Applicants	Existing public schools
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public only
Appeals Process	No
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	Support of a majority of school faculty, instructional staff; and parents; must show school, community and parental involvement in development of petition and operation of charter; local board must approve charter petition
Recipient of Charter	Public school
Term of Initial Charter	4 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes, except as specified in the charter law
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	Not addressed
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	No
Transportation for Students	Not addressed
Facilities Assistance	No
Technical Assistance	State board of education may provide assistance with development of petition
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must prepare annual progress report for parents, community, local school board, and state board of education; state board must prepare a report before January 1, 1999, and each year thereafter, for the legislature
Funding	
Amount	Basic funding not addressed; no additional funds appropriated
Path	From district
Fiscal Autonomy	No
Start-up Funds	No

Mississippi (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Charter school teachers remain employees of district (Mississippi is a right-to-work state)
Certification	Same as requirements for other district teachers (in all districts, 5-10% of teaching staff has some relief for certification requirements)
Leave of Absence from District	Not applicable
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	Students of local district and children of school staff
Preference for Enrollment	Students previously enrolled in school, then children of school staff, then other district students
Enrollment Requirements	No
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Except for preference for enrollment described above, selection method for over-enrollment will be specified in the charter
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	Not addressed
Accountability	Same as district provisions: must meet state education goals and take state-mandated tests

Missouri (1998) The 14th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	Unlimited in specified jurisdictions
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	18
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	The school boards of Kansas City or St. Louis district, a four-year college or university located in Missouri with an approved teacher education program that meets regional or national standards of accreditation, a community college or the mayor of the city in which one of the two districts is located, and the state board upon appeal
Eligible Applicants	Any person, group or organization
Types of Charter Schools	Conversions up to 5% of operating public schools, new starts
Appeals Process	If any one of the sponsors reject the charter school they can appeal to the State Board. If the State Board rejects the application then judicial review is an option
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	Not required
Recipient of Charter	Charter school governing body
Term of Initial Charter	No less than 5 no more than 10 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes
Legal Autonomy	Yes
Governance	Specified in charter
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations. They may contract for services including management
Transportation for Students	School districts required to provide transportation to pupils attending a charter school located in the district, with dual funding for charter and other public school students
Facilities Assistance	A school district may incur bonded indebtedness or take other measures to provide for physical facilities for charter schools that it sponsors or contracts with
Technical Assistance	Not addressed
Reporting Requirements	Annual report cards to sponsor, local district and state

Missouri (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	100% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue. Estimated portion is about $5,100, not including additional eligibility required funding
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	No state funding
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Not applicable, freedom from existing bargaining contracts
Certification	No more than 20% of full-time instructional staff may be filled by non-certified personnel
Leave of Absence from District	Up to three years or as agreed to by teacher and district
Retirement Benefits	For charter employees who choose to remain employees of district only. All eligible for retirement package of their choice. If already teacher in a conventional district they can remain employee of district and remain with package
Students	
Eligible Students	Residents of St. Louis and Kansas City or if they are a part of the transfer program
Preference for Enrollment	May establish a geographical area around the school whose residents will receive a preference. May also give a preference for admission of children whose siblings attend the school or whose parents are employed at the school
Enrollment Requirements	A charter school shall not limit admission based on ethnicity, national origin, disability, gender, income level, proficiency in the English language or athletic ability, but may limit admission to pupils within a given age group or grade level
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
Special Needs	Charter schools must assure that the needs of special education children are met in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations; the proportion share of state and federal resources generated by students with disabilities must follow the child
Accountability	Charter schools must be financially and academically accountable. The state board of education shall develop a method to measure student progress, starting with the collection of baseline data during at least the first three years for determining how the charter school is performing and to the extent applicable, participate in the essential skills tests and the nationally standardized norm-referenced achievement tests, as designated

Nevada (1997, amended July 1999) The 12th weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	21 throughout the state, with some geographic restrictions; in addition, an unlimited number serving at-risk students
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	5
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards (must first be reviewed by state board of education)
Eligible Applicants	Committee consisting of at least 3 certified teachers and up to 10 additional community members
Types of Charter Schools	New starts, public school conversions
Appeals Process	To the state board's subcommittee on charters that may recommend reconsideration; to the district court thereafter
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	No
Recipient of Charter	Charter school committee
Term of Initial Charter	6 years (possibility of renewal after 3 years)
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Some laws may be waived
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	Contracts and services are negotiated with the district
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations, but charter schools may contract with for-profit organizations to run the school
Transportation for Students	Specified in charter
Facilities Assistance	No, may use existing public school facilities after hours, otherwise may not use existing public or private facilities
Technical Assistance	Not addressed
Reporting Requirements	Must file same annual reports as required of district public schools
Funding	
Amount	100% of per-pupil funding
Path	From state to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes , but district still maintains some control over funding
Start-up Funds	No

Nevada (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining	District agreements apply to charter employees except with negotiated provisions governing preparation time, number of bonuses, days, and teaching hours, if waived
Certification	70% must be licensed, or for vocational schools at least 50%
Leave of Absence from District	Up to 6 years
Retirement Benefits	May administer its own or negotiate with the district
Students	
Eligible Students	All students (however, counties with a population above 400,000 may have four charters for every 75,000 pupils, counties between100,000 and 400,000 may have 4 charters, counties with less than 100,000 may have 1 charter)
Preference for Enrollment	None
Enrollment Requirements	None
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	Must be primary consideration for establishing charters; an unlimited number of charters may be started to serve at-risk students
Racial Balance Provisions	May not differ from district in which the charter is located by more than 10%
Accountability	All statutes regarding student proficiency and achievement apply

New Hampshire (1995, amended 1997, June 1999) The 17th weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	5 by 1997; 10 per year through 1999; no limit as of 2000
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	0
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school board (subject to state board of education approval)
Eligible Applicants	Non-profit organizations, 2 or more certified teachers, 10 or more parents
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	Denied charters may be appealed to state board of education, but the state's recommendation is non-binding
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	Conversions must be supported by (a) majority of teachers in school (or two thirds of teachers in a district that has only one school), (b) school principal, and (c) superintendent; local voters have two opportunities to approve or deny charter schools: (1) voters decide whether they will allow charter schools in their district; (2) after a specific charter school contract is approved by both the local school board and the state board of education, it is put on ballot for voter ratification; additionally, since charter school budget is shown as a separate line item in district's budget, voters could in theory limit or eliminate funding for the school
Recipient of Charter	Applicant receives charter; once board of trustees are selected by founding non-profit (all charter schools in state organize as non-profits), they assume control of school
Term of Initial Charter	5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes
Legal Autonomy	Yes
Governance	Board of trustees, including at least 2 parents; teachers may serve on board
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations
Transportation for Students	Transportation plan, including reasonable provision for students outside district, must be specified in charter
Facilities Assistance	Charter schools may lease, through the district, buildings that receive state school building aid, but are not directly eligible for such aid
Technical Assistance	Not addressed
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must prepare quarterly report for local school board and annual report for parents, local school board, and state board of education. Charters will perform fiscal accounting and audits by an independent certified accountant

New Hampshire (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	Minimum of 80% of district's prior year average cost per pupil, as determined by department of education, follows students to school; in addition, special education funding also follows students
Path	From district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	No state or federal funding
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Charter school teachers are not covered by existing district bargaining agreement; they may work independently, or negotiate as separate, newly organized unit with charter school governing body
Certification	50% of charter school teacher staff must be certified or have three years teaching experience
Leave of Absence from District	Not addressed
Retirement Benefits	Charter school teachers may choose to participate in state retirement system
Students	
Eligible Students	All students (including out-of-state students)
Preference for Enrollment	Students attending public school prior to conversion; students in district
Enrollment Requirements	Charter schools may screen students based on academic aptitude, academic achievement or need, provided that such screening is related to the academic mission of the school
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Charter school students must participate in statewide assessment program

New Jersey (1996) The 17th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	Unlimited, the original cap of 135 expired in 2000
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	48
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	State commissioner of education (local school boards have advisory power)
Eligible Applicants	Teachers and/or parents in district; college/university or private entity in conjunction with teachers/parents
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	Denied charter may be appealed to state board of education
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For conversions, 51% of teachers and 51% of parents must support
Recipient of Charter	Charter school governing board
Term of Initial Charter	4 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No, exemptions from particular laws, regulations, and policies may be requested in charter application
Legal Autonomy	Yes
Governance	Board of trustees; if charter school is established by private entity, its representatives may not constitute a majority of the board
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations, but charter schools may contract with for-profit organizations to run the school
Transportation for Students	Provided by district
Facilities Assistance	Charter school facilities are exempt from public school facilities regulations (except for safety and health regulations)
Technical Assistance	Not addressed
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must prepare annual report for parents, local school board, county superintendent, and state commissioner of education
Funding	
Amount	90% of the lesser of a) state and district operations funding based on average district per-pupil revenue or b) state-mandated minimum per-pupil spending. Estimated portion is about $7,000
Path	Through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes

New Jersey (cont.)	
Start-up Funds	No state funding; federal charter school funding will be applied to start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Teachers in converted public schools are covered by district bargaining agreement; teachers in new starts may remain covered by district bargaining agreement, negotiate as a separate unit with charter school governing board, or work independently
Certification	Required
Leave of Absence from District	Up to 3 years
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	All students in state
Preference for Enrollment	Students in the district; siblings of students in the school
Enrollment Requirements	Charter school may not base enrollment on academic achievement or ability; school may establish reasonable criteria for students (for example, school may request that prospective students attend an orientation meeting)
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	Law encourages formation of charter schools in urban areas with participation of higher education institutions
Racial Balance Provisions	Law requires charter schools to seek cross section of school age population including racial and academic factors
Accountability	Charter schools must participate in statewide testing program (and may use other assessments)
Other Features	
Size	The limitation of 500 students or 25% of student population of district, whichever is less, expired in 2000

New Mexico (1993, amended May 1999) The 8th weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	75 new, 25 conversion
Number of Schools Operating (As of Spring 2000)	3
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards
Eligible Applicants	Any individual or group
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts
Appeals Process	State board of Education within 30 days. The decision of the state board is binding (The state board may also review local board decisions)
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	65% of teachers must support; must be evidence of support and substantial involvement of parents in developing charter proposal
Recipient of Charter	Applicant
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No; certain exemptions from particular laws, regulations, and policies may be negotiated and specified in charter or requested later through waiver process
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	Specified in charter
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School Allowed to Earn a Profit	No
Transportation for Students	May negotiate with district
Facilities Assistance	N/A
Technical Assistance	Available upon request from department of education
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must prepare annual accountability report for parents, local school board, and department of education
Funding	
Amount	Minimum of 98% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue. Estimated portion is about $4,500
Path	Through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes; charter school submits a school-based budget to local school board for approval; local board authority is limited to ensuring that sound fiscal practices are followed
Start-up Funds	About $1 million is set aside for the expansion of charter schools

New Mexico (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Conversions are covered by district collective bargaining agreement; collective bargaining is an option for new starts
Certification	Required
Leave of Absence from District	Not necessary (charter school teachers remain employees of the district)
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	Those in the district
Preference for Enrollment	Students attending original public school prior to conversion
Enrollment Requirements	Not permitted
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Not yet addressed
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Statewide assessment
Other	Creation of three charter school pilot districts

New York (December 1998) The 10th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	100, conversions are unlimited
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	5
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards for conversions, the board of trustees of the State University of New York (SUNY) (50), or the Board of Regents (50). In NYC, the chancellor charters conversion and new starts, NYC conversions must go through the chancellor
Eligible Applicants	Teachers, parents, school administrators, community residents or any combination thereof
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	Majority of parents for conversions only
Recipient of Charter	Governing board
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes
Legal Autonomy	Yes
Governance	Specified in charter
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Yes
Transportation for Students	Same as for private schools, details specified in charter
Facilities Assistance	N/A
Technical Assistance	Private entities are encouraged to provide assistance
Reporting Requirements	Annual report that includes progress to educational objectives, financial statement, indications of parental and student satisfaction. Renewal is dependent upon the reporting
Funding	
Amount	Formula results in about 2/3 of traditional school's, approximately $4,000-$10,000 depending on the district
Path	Through district to charter school, mandates that all funds follow
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	Charter school stimulus fund

New York (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Schools enrolling up to 250 students in the first year are exempt (and they remain so), schools with enrollment larger than 250 must comply. Ten schools are totally exempt
Certification	30% or less than 5 teachers permitted to have other credentials, noncertified teachers must meet specified criteria
Leave of Absence from District	Two years or less
Retirement Benefits	The employees of the charter school may be deemed employees of the local school district for the purpose of providing retirement benefits, including membership in the teachers' retirement system and other retirement systems open to employees of public schools
Students	
Eligible Students	Open enrollment, at-risk service encouraged
Preference for Enrollment	Preference given to students and siblings of district employees
Enrollment Requirements	At least 50 children and 3 teachers are required unless compelling justification is presented
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Random selection
At-Risk Provisions	Preference to applications that demonstrate the capability to provide comprehensive learning experiences to students identified by the applicants as at risk of academic failure
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	State standards and Regents requirements apply as they do for other public schools
Other Features	- Charter application period is continuous - A fiscal impact statement is required in the application - Special education provisions are decided by the district, it can be provided by the district, charter, or a 3rd party

North Carolina (1996, amended 1997, 1998) The 11th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	100 (maximum 5 per district per year)
Number of Schools Operating (As of Spring 2000)	75
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards, state board of education. The University of North Carolina is permitted to sponsor but has yet to do so (Local board and UNC approval subject to final approval by state board)
Eligible Applicants	Person, group of persons, or non-profit corporation
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public and private, new starts (but not home-based schools)
Appeals Process	Charter denied by local school board or UNC institution may be appealed to state board of education
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For conversions, majority of teachers and uncertified staff at school must support; evidence that a significant number of parents support conversion must also be provided; districts must provide and sponsors must consider impact statement
Recipient of Charter	Applicant
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes from state laws; yes from district regulations except for local-board-sponsored charters, which must negotiate with sponsor district for waivers from district rules
Legal Autonomy	Yes, but state and local officials exercise additional oversight
Governance	Specified in charter
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School Allowed to Earn a Profit	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations, but charter schools may contract with for-profit organizations to run the school
Transportation for Students	Charter schools must provide same transportation assistance as district public schools
Facilities Assistance	Districts required to lease available public space to charters so long as it is "economically viable;" charters may lease space from sectarian organizations so long as sectarian symbols are removed
Technical Assistance	Department of education must provide technical assistance to charter school applicants upon request
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must comply with reporting requirements established by state board of education in the Uniform Education Reporting System; charter school must prepare annual report for chartering authority and state board; state board must prepare annual report on academic progress, best practices, and effect of charter schools on districts for legislature

North Carolina (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	100% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue; special needs funding also follows the student. Estimated portion is about $3,300
Path	State funds flow directly to charter school; local funds pass through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	No state funding; federal charter school funding will be applied to start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	For Charter school sponsored by local school board teachers remain subject to district work rules unless they negotiate to work independently; for all other charter schools, teachers are not subject to district work rules (North Carolina is a right-to-work state)
Certification	25% of teachers in elementary charter schools and 50% in secondary charter schools may be uncertified
Leave of Absence from District	Up to 6 years
Retirement Benefits	Teachers have the option to participate. Charter boards decide whether to particpate or not
Students	
Eligible Students	All students in state
Preference for Enrollment	Children of charter's professional staff; in a charter's first year of operation the lesser of 10% or 20 slots may be reserved for children of founding board members; for public conversions, students in attendance area of former public school (for private conversions, students attending the school prior to conversion may not receive preference)
Enrollment Requirements	Not permitted
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	Preference in the approval process is given to charter schools designed to serve at-risk students
Racial Balance Provisions	After one year, charter school must reasonably reflect racial balance of district (or, if serving special population, must resemble the balance of that population in the district)
Accountability	State tests apply
Other Features	
Impact Aid	Districts with fewer than 3,000 students with an enrollment decrease larger than 4% are eligible for state reimbursement of up to 4%
School Size	Charter schools must have a minimum number of students (65) and teachers (3), though exceptions are allowed; may increase by 10% without additional approval from sponsor
Termination of Charter	If two thirds of teachers and support staff request, charter may be terminated

Ohio (1997) The 15th weakest of the nation's 37 charter schools	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	Unlimited number of charter schools located in the counties of the Big Eight Districts (Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, Akron, Canton and Youngstown, but excluding Toledo[1])
Number of Schools Operating (As of Spring 2000)	48
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Any local school board or joint vocational board in the county in which the big-eight district resides, or state board of education
Eligible Applicants	Any individual or group of individuals
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public schools and new starts (but not private school conversions)
Appeals Process	No, but rejected applicants may apply to other chartering authorities
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	No
Recipient of Charter	Governing authority of the charter school
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 3 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes, except for a few non-education regulations identified in the charter law; also school must be open a minimum of 920 hours per year
Legal Autonomy	Yes
Governance	Specified in charter
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School Allowed to Earn a Profit	Charters must organize as non-profit, but may subcontract with for-profit organizations
Transportation for Students	The district must provide transportation to resident students attending a charter school within the district, but is not required to provide transportation to resident students attending a charter school outside the district
Facilities Assistance	Charter school may negotiate with the district to lease a public school facility
Technical Assistance	Provided by State Community School Commission, established by the Department of Education
Reporting Requirements	School must submit program and financial audits to parents and sponsor; financial reports must be kept in same manner as those of district schools
Funding	
Amount	Formula for that county plus the cost of doing business plus any special needs money. Estimated portion is about $3,600

1 A pilot program was passed for Lucas County in June 1997; however, no part of this charter law applies to that program.

Ohio (cont.)	
Path	State Department of Education
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	No
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	For start-ups, teachers may work independently or form a bargaining unit; for conversions, subject to district's collective bargaining agreement, unless a majority of the charter's teachers petition to work independently or form their own unit
Certification	Required, but alternative certification is available in the state. Non-certified personnel may teach up to 12 hours / week
Leave of Absence from District	3 years minimum
Retirement Benefits	Not addressed, except that teachers on leave from the district are eligible to purchase district employee benefits
Students	
Eligible Students	Students eligible to attend school in the Big Eight districts
Preference for Enrollment	Students enrolled in the school the previous year, and siblings of enrolled students
Enrollment Requirements	School may choose to limit enrollment to students in a particular geographic area or to at-risk students; school must enroll at least 25 students
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	School may restrict enrollment to at-risk students
Racial Balance Provisions	Minority and ethnic enrollment must reflect community the school serves, and school must comply with any desegregation order in effect
Accountability	Statewide proficiency tests

Oklahoma (May 1999) The 18th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	Unlimited in school districts with 5,000 or more students and a population of at least 500,000 (Oklahoma City and Tulsa)
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	0
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards or vocational-technical school districts
Eligible Applicants	Any person or organization
Types of Charter Schools	Conversions, new starts; no private school conversions
Appeals Process	No, only a binding arbitration and mediation paid for by the school district
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	No
Recipient of Charter	Governing board of charter school
Term of Initial Charter	Not more than 3 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Limited waiver
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	Charter school governing board
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Not addressed
Transportation for Students	The charter school is responsible for providing transportation, but only within boundaries of the school district where it is located
Facilities Assistance	N/A
Technical Assistance	Department of education can provide
Funding	
Amount	At least 95% of average daily expenditure
Path	Through the district
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes
Start-up Funds	N/A

Oklahoma (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Optional
Certification	Specified in charter application
Leave of Absence from District	3 years with the district's approval
Retirement Benefits	May participate in the state's retirement system
Students	
Eligible Students	All students
Preference for Enrollment	Local students who reside within the district, and siblings
Enrollment Requirements	N/A
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Random, lottery process
At risk provisions	Academic enterprise zones may be designated for areas where 60% of residing children qualify for free or reduced-price lunch
Racial Balance Provisions	Subject to desegregation regulations
Accountability	State testing of student proficiency and achievement apply

Oregon (May 1999) The 16th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	Unlimited, but no more than 10% of students in the district (can be waived by school district – and sunsets in 2003)
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	4
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards
Eligible Applicants	Any person or group who submits an application
Types of Charter Schools	Public school conversions, new starts; no private school conversions
Appeals Process	The state board of education may recommend revisions and sponsorship. It may not overturn local decisions but may become the school's sponsor
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	No
Recipient of Charter	Governing board of charter school
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Automatic waiver from statutes and rules; the charter can specify rules and statutes that apply
Legal Autonomy	Yes, but autonomy may depend on the district
Governance	NA
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Yes
Transportation for Students	Charter is responsible; may negotiate with the district
Facilities Assistance	Districts should make available a list of open public school buildings or portions of buildings that could be used by a charter school
Technical Assistance	Department of Education can provide
Funding	
Amount	At least 80% of the district's average expenditure for K-8; 95% for 9-12 For schools through state board: 90% for K-8 and 95% for 9-12
Path	Through the district
Fiscal Autonomy	No
Start-up Funds	Grants and loans available through federal funds

Oregon (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Teachers may participate in collective bargaining units either independently or as a charter unit
Certification	At least one-half must be licensed
Leave of Absence from District	Two year leave of absence and priority placement when returning to the district
Retirement Benefits	Eligible to participate in all benefits programs open to public school employees; still a public employee
Students	
Eligible Students	All students
Preference for Enrollment	Preference to siblings
Enrollment Requirements	Must have at least 25 students
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Random, lottery process; after first year can give priority to those enrolled previously and to siblings
At risk provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Annual audit and yearly report on academic progress

Pennsylvania (1997, Amended July 1999) The 12th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	Unlimited
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	47
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards; two or more local boards may grant regional charters
Eligible Applicants	Individuals, parents, teachers, nonsectarian institutions of higher education, museums, nonsectarian corporation not-for-profits, corporations, associations, or any combination thereof
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts
Appeals Process	Denied charters may be appealed to a specially established state appeal board. The decision is binding
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For conversions, more than 50% of the school's teachers and more than 50% of school's parents must support; all charter applications must demonstrate local support
Recipient of Charter	Charter school board of trustees (all charter schools in Pennsylvania organize as a public, nonprofit corporation)
Term of Initial Charter	3 to 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes, except for those that directly apply to charter schools, and other school code regulations and statutes specified in the charter law (significant majority of state education code, including regulations pertaining to school programs, is waived)
Legal Autonomy	Yes, but autonomy may depend on the district
Governance	Board of trustees, to be established according to terms in the charter; no member of a local school board may serve on the board
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations, but charter schools may contract with for-profit organizations to run the school
Transportation for Students	Transportation for in-district charter students is provided in the same manner as for other public school students in the district; transportation for non-district charter students is provided in the same manner as for non-public school students. If a district does not provide the required transportation, the Department of Education shall deduct the expenses from the district and pay it to the charter school
Facilities Assistance	Charter schools may be located in an existing public school facility, in space provided by a privately owned site, in a public building or in any other suitable location, but may not use public funds to build a facility; charters do not have to meet certain state regulations for public school facilities
Technical Assistance	Not addressed

Pennsylvania (cont.)	
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must prepare annual report for local school board and state secretary of education; in five years the secretary of education must commission an evaluation by an independent consultant for the governor, secretary and general assembly, including recommendations for continuation, modification, expansion or termination of the program
Funding	
Amount	Relevant funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil budgeted expenditure of the previous year (depending on the district, charter funding will be 70%-82% of district's per-pupil revenue); for regional charters and non-resident students, funds come from the district of student's residence; charters receive additional funding for special needs students, or may request the intermediate unit to assist in providing special-needs services at the same cost as provided to district schools. Estimated portion is about $4,000
Path	Through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes, but district still maintains some control over funding
Start-up Funds	Planning and startup grants available. Prior to passage of the bill, planning grants had been distributed to 67 potential charter applicants
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	The staff may bargain collectively, but not as part of the school district's bargaining unit
Certification	Up to 25% of teachers may be uncertified
Leave of Absence from District	Up to 5 years
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	All students in state
Preference for Enrollment	Siblings, children of charter school developers; students who reside in the sponsoring district or districts
Enrollment Requirements	Discrimination in enrollment decisions is prohibited, but the charter school may limit enrollment to a particular grade level or area of concentration and may set reasonable criteria to evaluate prospective students, consistent with the charter
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	Must not upset district's compliance with its desegregation order
Accountability	Statewide assessments and those set forth in charter
Other Features	
Funding Cushion	The state will compensate districts for non-public school students who enroll in charters (i.e. become public school students) for the first year of the student's attendance. A state grant program will allow districts to apply for "temporary transitional funding" to address the "budgetary impact relating to any student attending a charter school" (not available to conversion charters)

Rhode Island (1995, amended 1998, July 1999) The 5th weakest of the nation's 34 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	20 by 7/1/2000 serving no more than 4%, no more than 2 charters in a single district, except if that district has more than 20,000 students, then 4 may be granted
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	2
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	State board of regents, after charter school has been approved by local school committee or state commissioner of elementary and secondary education
Eligible Applicants	School districts, school personnel, public colleges and universities, and established Rhode Island nonprofit organizations existing for more than 2 years and not for the purpose of operating a school
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	Local bargaining unit may review charter, state objections, and have local school committee and commissioner of education respond before recommending the charter; for conversions, two thirds of teachers and half of parents at the school must support; for new starts, two thirds of number of teachers necessary to staff school and half of parents of number of children necessary to enroll must support
Recipient of Charter	Charter school governing body
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No, exemptions from particular laws, regulations, and policies must be specified in charter
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	Specified in charter
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations
Transportation for Students	Specified in charter
Facilities Assistance	A traditional district may access aid for reimbursement of school housing costs for district sponsored charter schools. Charter schools not sponsored by a district may apply for 30% reimbursement of school housing cost on a need basis
Technical Assistance	Not addressed
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must prepare annual report for parents, local school committee, and commissioner of education

Rhode Island (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	100% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue minus 5% of the state share, which the district retains for administration and impact; charter school and district negotiate cost of services school wants district to provide. Estimated portion is about $7,000
Path	The state share through the state and the local share through the district
Fiscal Autonomy	Specified in charter
Start-up Funds	Charter schools may apply for federal start up funding not to exceed $150,000 per charter school. If federal funds are not available, there shall be established a system of interest free loans provided from state funds not to exceed $150,000 to a single charter school
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Charter school teachers are covered by district bargaining agreement
Certification	Required
Leave of Absence from District	Not necessary (charter school teachers remain employees of the district)
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	Students in district
Preference for Enrollment	Students attending public school prior to conversion
Enrollment Requirements	School may establish reasonable academic standards for enrollment. Limited to 1% statewide if there are 10 charter schools, 2% if there are 20 charters. No more than 2 in each school district except for districts with more than 20,000 students, then 4 may be granted
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	Priority in approval process given to charter schools designed to serve at-risk students
Racial Balance Provisions	Charter school must have a program for encouraging enrollment of diverse student population; combined percentage of free-lunch students, special education students, and limited-English-proficient students must at least equal combined percentage for district as a whole
Accountability	Statewide uniform testing program

South Carolina (1996) The 15th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	No limit
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	8
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards
Eligible Applicants	Parents, teachers, community members
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	Denied charter may be appealed to state board of education
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For conversions, two thirds of teachers and two thirds of parents must support
Recipient of Charter	Charter school committee
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 3 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes
Legal Autonomy	Yes, they organize as non-profit organizations, but charter schools are part of the school district, so autonomy may depend on the district
Governance	Governing body is elected annually by employees and parents (one vote per child enrolled) and must include at least one teacher
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations
Transportation for Students	Charter school must provide transportation plan as specified in charter
Facilities Assistance	Department of education must publish list of vacant buildings owned by the state or by school districts
Technical Assistance	Local school board and state department of education must provide technical assistance to charter school applicants upon request
Reporting Requirements	Charter school must prepare annual report for local school board and department of education; state board of education must prepare interim report for legislature by 1998 and final report by 2001 on charter school results, comparing performance of charter school students with that of comparable students from other public schools
Funding	
Amount	100% of state and district operations funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue. Estimated portion is about $4,700

South Carolina (cont.)	
Path	Through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Yes , but district still maintains some control over funding
Start-up Funds	No state
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	South Carolina has no collective bargaining; for conversions, charter school teachers remain covered by district employment policy; for new starts, teachers may remain covered by district policy, negotiate as separate unit with charter school governing body, or work independently
Certification	10% of teachers in conversions and 25% in new starts may be uncertified
Leave of Absence from District	Up to 5 years
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	All students in state
Preference for Enrollment	Siblings, children of charter school employees
Enrollment Requirements	None permitted
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	Racial balance of charter school may not differ from district by more than 10%
Accountability	Statewide assessments; charter school also must meet or exceed content standards of district

Texas (1995, amended 1997, June 1999) The 7th strongest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	Unlimited number of district-approved charters; 120 state-board-approved (open-enrollment) charters as well as unlimited additional state-board-approved charters in which at least 75 percent of students are dropouts or at-risk of dropping out
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	167
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school districts for district-approved charters; state board of education for open-enrollment charters
Eligible Applicants	For district-approved charters, parents and teachers at existing public schools; for open-enrollment charters, existing public or private schools, parents, teachers, public or private institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, governmental entities
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, converted private, new starts (but not home-based schools)
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For district-approved charters, majority of teachers and majority of parents must support; for open-enrollment charters, state board may require applicants to submit a petition signed by a certain number of parents in area or hold public hearing to determine support; open-enrollment charter must include a statement from school district on the impact of charter school on district's enrollment and financial status
Recipient of Charter	Chief operating officer of charter school
Term of Initial Charter	Specified in charter, usually 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes
Legal Autonomy	For district-approved charters, no; for open-enrollment charters, yes
Governance	Governance structure must include officer positions, manner of election and removal, manner of filling vacancies, and the terms of office; felons or those with misdemeanors involving moral turpitude may not serve as an officer
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations
Transportation for Students	Neither regular public schools nor charter schools are required to provide transportation for students, though many do
Facilities Assistance	Not addressed
Technical Assistance	Not addressed
Reporting Requirements	Charters must participate in state's general public-school reporting system (PEIMS); State board has commissioned an outside team to conduct annual evaluation of open-enrollment charters

Texas (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	For district-approved charters, funding is negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter; for open-enrollment charters, 100% of state and district operations and maintenance funding follows students, based on average district per-pupil revenue. Estimated portion is about $4,000
Path	For district-approved charters, through district to charter school; for open-enrollment charters, directly to school from the state
Fiscal Autonomy	For district-approved charters, negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter; for open-enrollment charters, yes
Start-up Funds	No state funding; state distributes federal charter school funding to qualified charters for start-up expenses. A corporation may issue bonds for charter schools, like all traditional primary or secondary schools
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Texas is a right-to-work state; teachers at campus charters are district employees; teachers at open-enrollment charters work independently
Certification	Not required
Leave of Absence from District	For district-approved charters, no leave of absence necessary (charter school teachers remain employees of district); for open-enrollment charters, no
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	Students in geographic area specified in charter
Preference for Enrollment	District-approved charters must give priority based on geographic and residency considerations; for open-enrollment charters, no enrollment preferences are permitted
Enrollment Requirements	Charters may not discriminate in violation of state or federal law
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Specified in charter
At-Risk Provisions	The state board may approve open-enrollment charters beyond the 120-school cap if they serve at least 75% at-risk students
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Charters must participate in statewide testing system in which scores are publicly reported to state

Utah (1998) The 10th weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	8
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	3
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	State Board of Education
Eligible Applicants	Any individual or group; or a legal entity, (but not parochial schools or home schools)
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts
Appeals Process	No
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	For conversion, 2/3 parents and certified teachers
Recipient of Charter	Applicant of charter school
Term of Initial Charter	3 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No. A charter school may apply to the State Board of Education for a waiver of any state board rule that inhibits or hinders the charter school from accomplishing the mission or educational goals set out in its charter
Legal Autonomy	No, a charter school shall operate in accordance with its charter and is subject to state laws applicable to public schools, except as otherwise provided
Governance	Specified in the charter
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters must be non-profit, but may contract with a for profit organization to run the school
Transportation for Students	Can be negotiated between charter and local board
Facilities Assistance	The State Office of Education shall publish and make available a list of vacant and unused portions of buildings that are owned by the state or by school districts in the state and that may be suitable for the operation of a charter school. A charter school may participate in the Risk Management Fund upon the approval of the state risk manager and the governing body of the charter school
Technical Assistance	Available upon request
Reporting Requirements	Same as public schools including an annual financial audit report. The governing body of a charter school shall make annual progress reports to the State Board of Education and the Legislature through its Education Interim Committee

Utah (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	On average 75% of per pupil funding follows the child. The school district in which a charter school student resides shall pay to the host district 1/2 of the amount by which the resident district's per student expenditure exceeds the value of the state funding. Qualified students receive all their federal monies
Path	From state to school and district to school
Fiscal Autonomy	No
Start-up Funds	Yes. State Superintendent of Public Instruction may allocate grants for start-up costs, however no moneys were appropriated in 1998
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Teachers are employees of charter, and are not required to be district employees
Certification	Must either hold certification or have demonstrated competency under alternative programs. The school's governing body shall disclose the qualifications of its teachers to the parents of its students
Leave of Absence from District	An employee of a school district may request a leave of absence in order to work in a charter school upon approval of the local school board
Retirement Benefits	Negotiated, while on leave, the employee may retain seniority accrued in the school district and may continue to be covered by the benefit program of the district if the charter school and the district mutually agree
Students	
Eligible Students	All students
Preference for Enrollment	30% preference cap including student of a founding parent, siblings of enrolled students, district residents, and former students of that school (when applicable)
Enrollment Requirements	Same as other public schools
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	None
Accountability	Each participant school shall develop an accountability plan to measure student achievement against targets established by the school including state core assessments and required Stanford Achievement Tests

Virginia (1998) The 3rd weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	2 per district through July 1, 2000
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	0
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards
Eligible Applicants	Any person, group or organization
Types of Charter Schools	Conversion or new-start, no private conversion
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	"Adequate" number of parents, teachers, per-pupil support (subject to board interpretation)
Recipient of Charter	Governing board
Term of Initial Charter	3 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No. At discretion of Board of Education and per negotiation with school board
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	Not specified
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Yes
Transportation for Students	Yes, as provided in charter
Facilities Assistance	No rent may be charged, other fees negotiable
Technical Assistance	Provided by state
Reporting Requirements	Same as public schools
Funding	
Amount	Basic funding not addressed; charters treated as public school with fees negotiated
Path	From district
Fiscal Autonomy	No
Start-up Funds	Not addressed

Virginia (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Covered by district and any rules that apply
Certification	Required
Leave of Absence from District	On a contract basis
Retirement Benefits	Yes
Students	
Eligible Students	At-risk emphasized
Preference for Enrollment	Limited to those in school division
Enrollment Requirements	Not permitted, but preference to at-risk
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Lottery
At-Risk Provisions	One of each of two charters must serve at-risk
Racial Balance Provisions	Must fulfill court ordered desegregation
Accountability	State standards and testing apply

Wisconsin (1993, amended 1995, and 1998) The 18th weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	No limit
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	55
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Statewide: local school boards only, Milwaukee: school board, city of Milwaukee, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Milwaukee area Technical College
Eligible Applicants	Any person (individual, partnership, association, or politic or corporate body)
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, non sectarian private, new starts (but not converted private sectarian or home-based programs)
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	50% of teachers in a school or 10% of teachers in a school district must sign a petition, except for board-initiated charter schools, which may open without the signature or petition process
Recipient of Charter	Applicant
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	Yes from state; no from district (except Milwaukee). A board of control may also contract with one or more school boards to operate a charter school
Legal Autonomy	Yes, may be a corporate body
Governance	Specified in charter
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations, but may be managed by a corporate body
Transportation for Students	Not addressed
Facilities Assistance	Not addressed
Technical Assistance	No
Reporting Requirements	Charter schools must file same reports with department of public instruction as other public schools must file

Wisconsin (cont.)	
Funding	
Amount	Negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter; district is permitted to spend more on charter schools than regular public schools. Estimated portion not available
Path	Through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter
Start-up Funds	No state funding; federal charter school funding is being applied to start-up costs
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	In charter schools that are instrumentalities of the district, teachers are district employees who may remain covered by district bargaining agreement or form a separate bargaining unit. Non instrumentality charter schools may hire their own employees. The school board of the sponsoring district shall determine whether the charter school is an instrumentality of the district. If it is not an instrumentality it may not employ personnel for the school
Certification	Required, but if search for licensed teacher is unsuccessful, a special charter school license is available for persons with bachelor's degree in their field who take 6 credits of training each year and are supervised by a teacher with a regular license
Leave of Absence from District	Not applicable
Retirement Benefits	Retirement benefits extend only to teachers whose charters are instrumentalities of the school district are employees of the district and remain in the state retirement program
Students	
Eligible Students	Students in sponsoring district(s) or state open enrollment students if space is available
Preference for Enrollment	For conversions, students in attendance area of former public school
Enrollment Requirements	Legislation mentions enrollment requirements, but department of education interpretation is that charter schools may not use academic ability criteria; they may, however, define certain other criteria for enrollment, such as at-risk criteria
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Not addressed
At-Risk Provisions	Local school boards must give preference in awarding charters to schools designed to serve children at-risk
Racial Balance Provisions	Racial balance must mirror district
Accountability	Statewide assessments; also, charter must describe method by which student progress toward state educational goals will be measured
Other Features	
District wide Charter and Multi-District Charters	A district may convert all of its schools to charter schools, if at least 50% of teachers in the district approve and the local school board provides alternative public school arrangements for students who do not wish to attend charter schools or are not enrolled; multi-district charters are also permitted

Wyoming (1995) The 6th weakest of the nation's 37 charter laws	
General Statistics	
Number of Schools Allowed	No limit
Number of Charters Operating (As of Spring 2000)	0
Approval Process	
Eligible Chartering Authorities	Local school boards
Eligible Applicants	Any person
Types of Charter Schools	Converted public, new starts (but not converted private or home-based schools)
Appeals Process	None
Formal Evidence of Local Support Required	10% of teachers in district or 50% of teachers in a school, and 10% of parents in district or 50% of parents in a school must support
Recipient of Charter	School
Term of Initial Charter	Up to 5 years
Operations	
Automatic Waiver from Most State and District Education Laws, Regulations, and Policies	No, charter schools, like other public schools, may seek waivers on a case-by-case basis from state board of education
Legal Autonomy	No
Governance	Specified in charter, including process to ensure parental involvement
Charter School Governing Body Subject to Open Meeting Laws	Yes
Charter School May be Managed or Operated by a For-Profit Organization	Charters may not be granted directly to for-profit organizations
Transportation for Students	Provided by district
Facilities Assistance	None
Technical Assistance	None
Reporting Requirements	Local school board must prepare annual report for state board of education on each charter school operating within the district; after three years, state board must prepare report for legislature
Funding	
Amount	Negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter
Path	Through district to charter school
Fiscal Autonomy	Negotiated with sponsor district and specified in charter
Start-up Funds	No state or federal funding

Wyoming (cont.)	
Teachers	
Collective Bargaining / District Work Rules	Wyoming is not a collective bargaining state; teachers remain employees of the district, not the charter school
Certification	Required
Leave of Absence from District	Specified in charter
Retirement Benefits	Specified in charter
Students	
Eligible Students	All students in state
Preference for Enrollment	For conversions, students in attendance area of former public school
Enrollment Requirements	Enrollment requirements are permitted, but enrollment may not be based exclusively on academic ability or achievement
Selection Method (in case of over-enrollment)	Not addressed
At-Risk Provisions	None
Racial Balance Provisions	Means by which racial balance of students in charter school will reflect balance in district as a whole is specified in charter
Accountability	None

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